University of Alberta

Exploring children's goals for recess engagement

by

Sean Albert Dwyer

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted primarily to explore elementary school children's goals for participation in recess activities. Theory testing methods were used to determine the extent to which task value components of Eccles' model of achievement motivation are described by children 'in their own words' regarding choices at recess. Results of this study indicate that children do in fact describe their choices at recess in terms that are consistent with these task value components. This provides support for claims that recess can be an achievement setting, however, it appears that recess is not an achievement setting at all times to all children. Children described task specific goals such as ego- and task-involved goals as those described by Nicholls and Dweck & Elliot, within-person and environment goals described by Ford & Nichols, and broader goals as defined by Eccles and her colleagues revealing the complexity of children's goals for recess engagement.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Most children view recess as a welcome break from schoolwork, a chance to socialize with friends or a time to continue a game of soccer-baseball that has been ongoing for the last week. Racing to be the first on the swings or joining classmates by the ice slide are part of the daily recess routine for many elementary schoolchildren. Individual children have personal reasons why they choose to engage in activities at recess. Some children are concerned with demonstrating that they are the best or the fastest while others are satisfied to walk around by themselves or socialize with their best friends. To many children, recess is a time when they can choose what they want to do. Whatever choices are made, children seem to have diverse goals for recess time participation. In an attempt to better understand children's goals for recess, this study was an exploration of children's recess goals and their relationship to the choices and decisions that children make.

This study captured the perception of children's goals in their own words, and explored, in depth, the value they place on these goals. It was important to determine the extent to which the assumptions made about children's goals at recess are borne out in those goals identified by children themselves. Children's motivation and goals for informal play are currently seen as complex and difficult to explain. The purpose of this study was to better understand children's goals for recess time. The expectancy-value theory proposed by Eccles et al. (1983) seemed appropriate to use in an attempt to better understand and explain children's goals and choices for recess. There are three main reasons that support the use of this

model in this study. First, Eccles' model is an achievement motivation model. In this regard, if recess is an achievement setting, the model should describe children's choices for recess. Secondly, the model is one of choice. Although recess is a prescribed part of the school day, it is a setting where children are generally free to engage in activities of their own choosing. Thirdly, recommendations from earlier work with Eccles' model suggested applying the model in unstructured settings involving free-choice of activities. Using this theory and the associated model of achievement motivation, this study was an attempt to test certain components of the model and determine the extent to which they explain children's goals for recess engagement. Eccles and her colleagues (1983) suggested that children's behaviours (choice, persistence, and performance) in achievement settings are most directly influenced by expectancies and values (Figure 1, p.3).

As indicated in the model, expectancies are most directly influenced by the children's task specific beliefs, which include self-concept of ability and perceptions of task difficulty (Eccles et al., 1983). Values are also influenced directly by children's task specific beliefs as well as their interpretation of past events, and their goals and general self-schemata (Eccles et al., 1983). Eccles and her colleagues (1983) suggested that children's perception of task value consists of four components. These include (1) attainment value, which is the importance of doing well on the task, (2) intrinsic value, defined as the subjective interest in the task, (3) utility value, in terms of how the task relates to future goals, often extrinsic in nature, and (4) cost, referring to the negative aspects of engaging in

the task (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Children's goals and task specific beliefs are interrelated, both influencing task values, with the latter leading directly to expectancies. Expectancies and task values, then, lead to achievement behaviours.

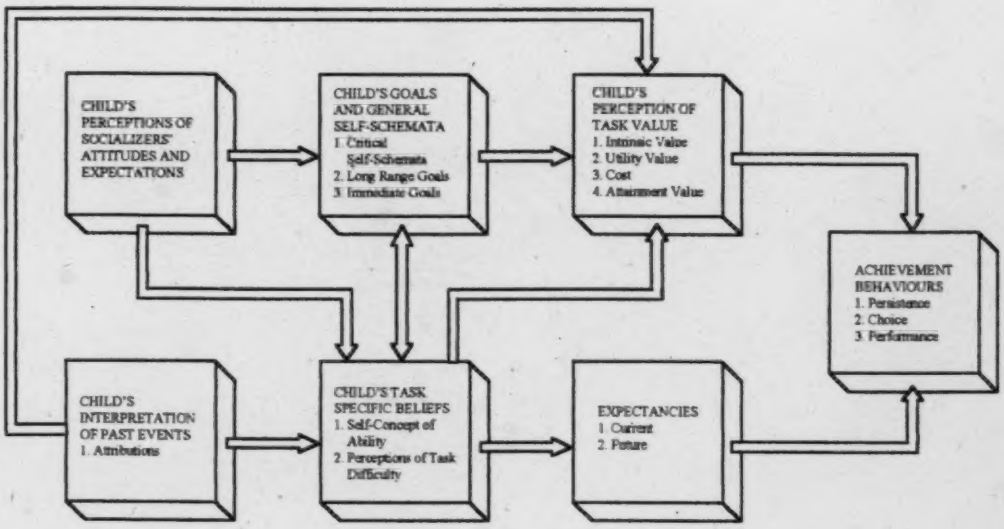

Figure 1. Eccles' (1983) Psychological Model of Achievement Motivation (modified from p. 100).

Investigators have made the argument for recess being an achievement setting. It is believed that children, especially boys, seek to achieve in situations that relate to social acceptance and play participation (Evans & Roberts, 1987; Watkinson & Causgrove Dunn, 1997). Thus, recess activities such as climbing, playing games, and running may be conceived as achievement tasks in which children's engagement is determined by their competence and their motivation.

Children often have goals for successful participation in these achievement activities. One type of goal as defined by Nicholls (1979) and Dweck and Elliot (1983) is ego-involved or performance goals. These children try to outperform other children or be the best at an activity. For example, running usually involves racing to finish first or to demonstrate that they are faster than the other children. Not all children, however, have goals to be successful in achievement settings. Therefore, the child's larger within-person and environment-person goals (Ford, 1992; Ford & Nichols, 1987) may determine decisions to take part in any given activity at recess. Sometimes children with a low expectation for success in games at recess will still choose to join and perform, even poorly, in order to be involved with other children. In such situations, children may have other goals than achievement goals for the activity. The importance of social inclusion may override the importance of task or ego-involved goals. Accordingly, children's intentions and goals for recess involvement are individual in nature and therefore very complex.

Watkinson and Causgrove Dunn (1997) are currently testing a protocol based on a self-report card for children as young as 6 years to determine their activity choices at recess. The self-report card allows for the reporting of children's recess participation and facilitates the identification of the culturally normal or common activities of their peers. It also allows for the exploration of children's perceptions of competence and perceptions of the value for a wide range of recess activities.

Culturally normal skills are those that are commonly engaged in by a majority of children at certain ages within a given socio-cultural setting (Wall, Reid & Paton, 1990). Such a setting could be a child's class. Young (1985), in an ethnographic study of elementary school students, found that at recess classroom units remained relatively unaltered. "More often classes remained self-contained with their own members, activities, and territory" (Young, 1985, p. 131). Culturally normal implies a social criterion. The ensuing question is; "Does this then mean that culturally normal activities are most valuable and those in which all children should participate"? Not necessarily. However, the social aspect that accompanies culturally normal activities can have an important social attachment, which may determine whether some children are included or excluded from these activities by their classmates or themselves. Evidence suggests that awkward children experience a syndrome that leads to a lack of participation, poor fitness, withdrawal, and exclusion (Wall et al., 1990), and consequently these children do not take part in physical activity at recess as much as their peers (Bouffard, Watkinson, Thompson, Causgrove Dunn, & Romanow, 1996). It is this social aspect that does not appear to be easily explainable within the current framework of Eccles' model of achievement motivation (Eccles et al., 1983).

In this study, children's responses were explored in order to determine what intentions and goals might underlie decision making about activity engagement at recess. There was an effort to determine if present achievement goal theories are sufficient in their explanation of children's recess engagement patterns. Thus, the main objective of this study was to explore the extent to

which Eccles' four components of task value reveal themselves in children's desires for playground outcomes. The study attempted to discover whether children describe their decisions to take part or not take part in physical activity at recess in terms of multiple goals, or in achievement terms that are consistent with task value components of Eccles' motivational model.

Theory testing has generally been conducted through the use of quantitative methods in which analysis of data is primarily deductive. Methods of analysis and coding in qualitative research methods are traditionally inductive. In this study, methodology involved both inductive and deductive approaches to organize and analyze data. Further discussion of how theory testing and inductive and deductive analyses were used in this study is included in the data analysis section.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of Theory and Children's Engagement in Recess Activity

"Achievement motivation theorists attempt to explain people's choice of achievement tasks, persistence on those tasks, and vigour in carrying them out" (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992, p. 265). Models of achievement motivation including attribution theory (Weiner, 1979, 1985), expectancy-value theory (Atkinson, 1957, 1966; Eccles et al. 1983; Feather, 1982) and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) "... all have proposed that individuals' expectancies for success and perceptions of ability on different tasks play a prominent role in their motivation

to perform these tasks" (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992, p.265). Wigfield and Eccles (1992) pointed out that "Expectancy-value theorists have argued that the incentive value of the task is another important determinant of task choice; individuals will tend to do tasks they positively value and avoid tasks they negatively value (Atkinson, 1957; Eccles et al., 1983; Feather, 1982)" (p. 265). Wigfield and Eccles (1992) acknowledged that individuals can have positive efficacy expectations for certain tasks, yet they may avoid participation in such tasks since they hold little value for them.

Eccles' model of achievement motivation rests on several assumptions. The main assumption is that choices are influenced by an individual's perceptions of reality rather than by reality itself (Eccles & Harold, 1991). Choices are made by an individual in the presence of the opportunity to make one of many possible choices.

> Furthermore, these choices, whether made consciously or nonconsciously, are assumed to be guided by one's expectations for success at the various options; by such core personal values as achievement needs, competency needs, personal goals, motivational orientation, and gender-role schemata; by more utilitarian values such as the importance of participating in various activities for one's future goals; and by the potential cost of investing time in one activity rather than the another (Eccles & Harold, 1991, p. 10).

The model is based on social psychological reasons for choices people make in achievement settings. The components of the model, expectancy and value then, "...are defined as cognitive rather than purely motivational constructs" (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992, p. 279-280). In the development of the model, Eccles' and her colleagues (1983) argued that choices in achievement settings are made both

consciously and unconsciously. To this point, much of their work has dealt mainly with conscious aspects of choice. The model was originally developed to explain adolescents' achievement choices (Wigfield, 1994) but has since been used to explore younger children's choices in achievement settings across various domains including math, reading, and sports. However, these investigations have assumed that individuals valued such tasks. Children's choices are limited by the structure of school subjects and organized sports. Recess, however, is a time in the school day when children are most free to choose their own activities. If recess is an achievement setting then Eccles' model of achievement motivation should be appropriate for the understanding and analysis of elementary schoolchildren's goals and motivation.

Eccles' and her colleagues' (1983) model of achievement motivation is based on choices of the individual. It suggests that expectancies and values influence choices in achievement settings. Expectancies and values have the most direct effect on persistence, choice and performance (Figure 1), with most evidence in support of the relation to choice (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992; Wigfield, 1994). The results of this research have demonstrated that values may contain four motivational components including attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value and cost.

Attainment value is defined as the importance of doing well on the task (Battle, 1965, 1966; Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Wigfield and Eccles (1992) also link attainment value to the degree to which the task will contribute to the child's feelings about the self. "Tasks will have higher attainment

value to the extent that they allow the individual to confirm salient aspects of these self-schemata" (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992, p. 280). A desire to confirm any one of these aspects of self-schema increases the attainment value of the activity and thereby increases the likelihood of choosing that activity (Eccles & Harold, 1991). For example, a child may engage in an activity because it will confirm that he or she is strong, fast, a good catcher, etc.

Intrinsic value is similar to intrinsic motivation defined by Vallerand, Fortier and Guay (1997) and Deci and Ryan (1985) as engaging in an activity or task for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from participation itself. Wigfield and Eccles (1992) define intrinsic value as the enjoyment an individual gets from performing the activity, or the subjective interest the individual has in the subject. Deci and Ryan (1980) and Harter (1981) "...have shown that when individuals are interested in tasks they will strive more, have higher perceptions of competence for the task, and have more positive affective reactions to the task" (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992, p. 299). More specifically, young children's task choices are primarily characterized by children's interest in the task, since they often do not have a clear concept of their performance level (Wigfield, 1994). Young children may do many activities in a short time before deciding on an activity that is most interesting to them. Throughout elementary school, the interests of children do begin to relate more to their level of performance, which may ultimately impact activity choices (Wigfield, 1994).

Utility value is described in terms of how the task might relate to the future goals of the child (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Tasks might relate to future goals

and may be carried out even though the child does not have interest in the task. The task then is completed, not for the intrinsic component, but to meet the child's future goals or objectives or as a means to another end. The utility component may represent the extrinsic component of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vallerand et al., 1997) whereby tasks are often undertaken to please others or simply to be with friends. In this way, engagement in the task is not for its own sake but instead to accomplish an extrinsic motive.

Cost as defined by Eccles et al. (1983) and Wigfield & Eccles (1992) is all the negative aspects associated with engagement in a task. "These include anticipated emotional states (e.g. performance anxiety and fear of both failure and success) as well as the amount of effort that will be necessary to succeed at the task" (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992, p. 280). With regards to effort, Eccles and her colleagues (1983) argued that "...as the anticipated amount of effort increases in relation to the amount of effort considered worthwhile, then the value of the task to the individual should decrease" (p. 94).

Children's abilities to distinguish between these value components have been studied by Eccles and her colleagues. Young children (Grade 1) were not able to distinguish between competence beliefs and expectancies for success, but did seem to be able to distinguish between competence beliefs and subjective values in math, reading and sport domains (Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, & Blumenfeld, 1993). In a study with fifth through twelfth grade children, three task value factors (perceived attainment value or importance, interest and perceived utility value or usefulness) were clearly distinguished (Wigfield, 1994). However,

Wigfield et al. (1990) in a factor analysis study of young children found that within each activity area items assessing the different components of task value tended to load together. This indicated that young children in early and middle elementary school did not seem to be able to clearly distinguish between the value components. Young children's subjective value of a task may initially be determined by the amount of pleasure derived from engaging in these tasks, which ultimately might be the basis upon which young children make choices regarding involvement in various tasks (Wigfield and Eccles, 1992). The differentiation of the value components has been shown to occur in the later elementary school years. Much of this evidence is based on involvement in academic subjects. It seems likely that children's values for tasks are domain-specific. For instance, recess involves more choice-making, perhaps enabling children to mature in their value structure earlier.

Eccles and her colleagues (1983) proposed "...that the value of a particular task to a particular person is a function of both the perceived qualities of the task and the individual's needs, goals, and self-perceptions. The relationship between goals and values described in Eccles' model (1983) exhibits a causal link; however, this relationship needs further assessment (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). "Currently goals are seen as predicting children's values; however, as discussed earlier it may be that children who value tasks in different ways may have different goals for those tasks" (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992, p. 304). The direction of the causal relationship, that is, goals being an antecedent to values (Eccles et al., 1983) is contradictory to the relationship between goals and values proposed by

Dweck and Elliot (1983), who discussed how learning and performance goals relate to children's subjective values (Wigfield, 1994). Dweck and Elliot (1983) defined learning goals as representing task-involved goals and performance goals. They argued that children's values are determined by the kind of achievement situations children are in. Dweck (1985) posited that it is likely for individuals to pursue both types of goals at one time or another and that both types of goals may be held simultaneously. If a child is in a achievement setting that is evaluative in nature he or she will likely value performance goals; whereas a child in a setting with a focus on mastery will likely value learning goals (Dweck and Elliot, 1983). It is these predictions that are contradictory to those proposed by Eccles et al. (1983) where goals are seen as determining values. The reason for this discrepancy might be explained by the difference in the kinds of goals discussed by both investigators.

> Eccles et al. focused more on broader life goals such as career plans, whereas Dweck and Elliot (1983) and Dweck and Leggett (1988) focused on more specific learning and performance goals in different achievement situations. One way to integrate these perspectives is to suggest that the broader goals discussed by Eccles et al. are causally prior to expectancies and values, with expectancies and values then determining the more specific goals in a given achievement setting (Wigfield, 1994, p.68).

In support of the proposed relationship between goals and choices, Dweck and Leggett (1988) contended that an individual's goals become evident when they encounter a situation in which they make a choice or a decision.

Suggestions for future research involve looking more closely at children's subjective values. Achievement goals have been studied extensively over the past

decade, however, research is needed to compare similarities and differences between the goals and values constructs (Wigfield, 1994). Testing of the model to date has mainly involved the use of questionnaires. Qualitative methods, such as interviews, could provide a clearer understanding of children's activity choices and allow the timely probing of children's conceptions of a given construct (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Wigfield, 1994). Most studies have been conducted with children in controlled settings such as in the classroom and with sport. Deeter (1989) suggested that future studies should evaluate Eccles' model in unstructured settings involving free-choice of activities. Recess would be such a setting since children are generally free to engage in activities of their choosing.

Interviewing Children

When interviewing children there are many factors that need to be considered simultaneously. "Interviewing children requires adapting to their developmental characteristics, which include limited attention span and language skills" (Stone & Lemanek, 1990, p.18). The accuracy of children's responses on a self-report measure and/or interview "...will depend on their acquisition of certain cognitive and social-cognitive skills" (Stone and Lemanek, 1990, p. 19). Social cognitive functioning in children is developmental in nature and includes the following areas: concept of self, person perception, and understanding of emotions (Stone and Lemanek, 1990). Children who are seven to eleven years of age possess a self concept which integrates psychological characteristics and social dimensions and are also aware of different components of the self which are

situationally based (e.g. as an athlete, student, son/daughter, etc.) (Stone and Lemanek, 1990).

At the outset of the interview it is important to provide the child with clear expectations of their role and the role of the interviewer. "In identifying the role of the interviewer it may be useful to identify purpose of the visit as well as activities in which the interviewer will engage during the interview session" (Witt et al., 1988, p. 404). Clear communication of expectations will have a major impact on the establishment of rapport with the child and the prevention of anxiety during the interview. Establishing a good rapport with the child can also increase the amount and accuracy of information obtained. A good rapport will help set the tone for the interview, build trust, and increase the level of a child's comfort with the interviewer (Boggs & Eyberg, 1990).

Communication skills, like a clear transmission of expectations, are helpful in building rapport and eliciting co-operation from the child. Boggs and Eyberg (1990) have identified seven communication skills that are useful to employ when conducting an interview with a child. These include an acknowledgement, a descriptive statement, a reflective statement, a praise statement, a question, a command, and a summary statement. Critical statements, as suggested by Boggs and Eyberg (1990), should be avoided at all times. The degree to which these communication skills are employed is largely dependent upon the individual child. For instance, verbal children may require less praise, descriptive statements and acknowledgements.

To aid in the establishment of rapport it is important to get to know the child informally prior to a formal interview. Interacting with them on the playground or in the classroom or playing games with them may be helpful to separate the interviewer from the role of teacher or adult authority figure (Ginsburg, 1997).

Anxiety on the part of the child is a critical consideration which ultimately determines the level of comfort of the child during the interview as well as the amount and accuracy of the information collected. Periods of silence, linked to anxiety, commonly occur in two ways during interviews. First, the interviewer who takes too much time between questions can create anxiety. Secondly, the interviewer who allows too much time to pass between the asking of a question and the answering of that question by the child can also create anxiety. It is important to not allow silence to continue since this often creates more anxiety. "Silence can be overcome by an acknowledgement or a redirection by saying for example, 'That's kind of a hard question to think about right now' or 'Maybe we can talk more about that later, because right now I'd like to talk about...' " (Boggs & Eyberg, 1990, p. 89).

As suggested by Bierman (1983) a direct questioning approach may arouse anxiety and produce resistance in some children. "For example, an assessor may want to know why a young girl remains on one side of the playground and refuses to play with other children during recess" (Witt et al., 1988, p. 397-8). This is a potential anxiety-provoking situation in which anxiety will likely be perpetuated by asking directly why she refuses to play with her friends. Providing a

comparable example of how another child behaved in a similar situation shifts the focus from the interviewee. "In this manner the assessor can either ask the child to provide reasons why 'another' child may behave this way or, as in the example, indicate only that other children have this problem as a means to get information about the target child's beliefs" (Witt et al., 1988, p. 397-8). Ginsburg (1997) offers a number of suggestions as to how an interviewer can deal with a child who is experiencing anxiety during an interview, the interviewer should:

1. Try to understand how the child must feel about the interview. Don't assume that the child automatically sees it as an enjoyable or even non-threatening experience.
2. Try to be warm and supportive. Show that you recognize the child is distressed and act in a conforming manner. Remember that you are dealing with a child who is likely to feel threatened.
3. Your initial description of the interview as having a purpose other than evaluation may help. But remember that it is not enough simply to tell the child what the interview is all about. You have to prove it in word and deed.
4. In many cases you can let the child know that she has not been singled out because of poor academic performance or general stupidity but that all (or most) children in the class are being interviewed. Of course, sometimes you cannot say this in honesty. (p. 135)

Attracting and maintaining the interest and attention of young children is a major challenge for many interviewers. Harter & Pike (1984) and Nowicki & Duke (1974) have used cartoon drawings to generate interest in a task. "Another method for engaging the interest of young children is the use of specific, relevant, age- and gender-appropriate questions" (Stone & Lemanek, 1990, p. 42). Children engaged in other tasks besides the interview, such as play, can provide inaccurate information since their attention to the question is reduced, which affects the reliability of the interview (Witt et al., 1988).

When questioning children it is very important to avoid the use of leading questions. Leading questions often cause anxiety and decrease the accuracy of information received from the child. "For example, do not ask, "Do you choose not to play with your classmates during recess because you feel awkward?" instead ask, "Why do you choose not to play with your classmates during recess?" (Witt et al., 1988, p. 397). Leading questions can encourage a child to provide a socially desirable answer. Use of open-ended questions may also limit the amount of information received from a child. "Contrary to popular belief, the open-ended question may stifle the amount of responding on the part of the child and restrict the number of topics about which useful information can be obtained" (Witt et al., 1988, p. 397).

Recording the interview requires sensitivity on the part of the interviewer. The level of anxiety that a child experiences is likely to be associated with his or her level of comfort in the technique used to record the interview. The interviewer should be aware however that a child who feels threatened to begin with would probably not ask that the interview not be recorded. Anxiety builds upon itself in such instances. With regard to note taking, the interviewer should address this prior to the start of the interview. "...If a child is told that the interviewer will be writing down what the child says to help the interviewer remember it later, the child may be less likely to inquire about what the interviewer is doing during actual questioning or to be distracted by note-taking activities" (Witt et al., 1988, p. 404). It is often necessary to audio record the interview since the interviewer cannot accurately retain all of the information that is conveyed by the child. Video

taping may be necessary but can be a complicated process. Someone is needed to operate the camera and most of all, the biggest challenge is to make the child feel comfortable with the situation. However, video does give non-verbal information that cannot be captured on audio tape such a body posture and movements, gestures, and facial expressions (Ginsburg, 1997).

Interviews are subject to many influences that often lead to misinformation and other errors in collection of data. The sources of such errors can originate from the structure of the interview, the respondent and the interviewer (Table 1).

Table 1: Common Sources of Interview Misinformation (Young, O'Brien, Gutterman, & Cohen, 1987, p. 614)

Structure of the interview	Respondent	Interviewer
Lack of specificity in the question	Need to give socially desirable answers	Interviewer characteristics [a]
Concepts of question are complex and multidimensional [a]	Lack of understanding of the questions [a]	Preferences and biases [a]
Sequence of questions	Memory lapses [a]	Variable emotional intensity [a]
Number of questions [a]	Experience of questioning as stressful [a]	Variable verbal facility
Question structure [a]	No true opinion [a]	Variable understanding of the questions
Unwarranted assumptions in the question	Differing emotional intensity among respondents	Recording errors
More than one question embedded in a single question	Variable perceptions of the situation and purpose [a]	
Sensitive or threatening element in the questions [a]	Timing of the interview	
Wording of the questions: Inexact terms		

Ambiguous or vague terms
Complex terms and sentences [a]
Biased words

[a] Commonly cited in interviews with children.

The validity and the reliability of the interview depend on the successful management of these sources of misinformation. Procedures should be tested in pilot studies prior to conducting interviews in the main portion of a study. Interviews are open to bias and therefore should be pilot tested. "During the pilot interviews the researcher should be alert to communication problems, evidence of inadequate motivation on the part of respondents, and other clues that suggest the need for rephrasing questions or revising the procedure" (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996, p.316-7).

The strengths of qualitative interviewing extend beyond traditional means of assessing children's perceptions, in particular, questionnaires. There are many problems associated with the questionnaire method, one being the child's level of comprehension. It is very difficult for an adult investigator to compose questions that will be completely understood by the children when left to complete the form themselves. Questionnaires are also rigid in that interesting responses or thought processes cannot be probed as readily as they can in an interview. Children's motivation for participation in a physical activity setting such as recess is very complex. Interview methods seem to offer the best means by which the investigator can communicate with a child concerning goals and decision making

processes. If conducted efficiently, the interview is an effective mode of investigation that is complex, interactive and responsive to the intricacies of the theory.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Participants

Participants in this study consisted of 14 third grade boys (n=7) and girls (n=7), 8 - 9 years old, in one classroom from a Canadian urban school. Only those for whom informed consent had been received were interviewed. Participants were selected who represent a range of recess engagement patterns as determined through their participation in a previous study (Watkinson et al., 1999). The criteria for selection involved purposeful sampling of participants according to variability of profiles including those who do/do not participate in culturally normal skills/activities of their classmates and those with limited/wide repertoires of recess activities. Since participation by children in this study was ultimately determined by self-selection, there is a chance that the sample was positively oriented regarding recess perceptions. Two subjects were excluded due to the fact that they were very uncomfortable in the interview session and, in fact, one interview was actually terminated early. It was also felt that, for these subjects, the interviewer had to guide the discussion more than was desirable towards the aim of achieving children's perceptions of their goals in their own words. As a result, the accuracy of the data from these children was in question and was not

used in the analysis.

Procedures

This study used qualitative interview techniques to explore children's goals and values for engagement in recess activities. Interview questions focused on the overall goals of children including the four value components identified by Eccles. There was a need to capture the perception of children's goals in their own words, and to explore, in depth, the value they place on these goals. It was important to determine the extent to which the assumptions made about children's goals at recess are borne out in those goals identified by children themselves.

Prior to conducting the study, all students from the grade three class were addressed together by the investigator. Students were informed of the nature of the research study, were assured that they were not being singled out for any specific reason, and that they were not being compared with other students. The class was addressed as a whole to ensure that those participating in the pilot portion of the study were not singled out from those participating in the main portion of the study. The investigator saw this as a very important ethical consideration. Students for whom informed consent was not received were not interviewed. This was also mentioned to the class to let these children know that they were not being excluded for reasons other than the fact that they did not return the permission slip from their parents/guardians.

A protocol of interview techniques, questions and structure was developed prior to actual interviewing. Following Bierman (1983), the use of drawings and

information on the fictitious reports were used in an indirect manner to ask questions. Self-report cards from a previous study (Watkinson & Causgrove Dunn, 1997) were used to encourage attention to the questions and to maintain interest in the task as recommended by Stone and Lemanek (1990). Questions were developed according to three categories: (1) indirect questioning, (2) direct questioning (theory testing), and (3) personal questioning (Appendix A). Using the indirect method enabled the investigator to gain insight into the goals of the child's recess engagement without providing reasons that would encourage acquiescence when asking directly. Wankel and Kreisel (1985b) noted that "the major advantage of using an open-ended questioning approach is that it gives the respondents the freedom to answer the questions in their own way" (p. 66). Direct questions are often difficult for children to answer since they may feel threatened by this approach. The indirect method then, focused on asking questions that relate to other hypothetical children, shifting the emphasis away from the child being interviewed. In this way the interviewer can ask the child to provide reasons why 'another' child may behave in a certain way, without posing a direct question that may make the interviewed child feel uncomfortable or self-conscious. This approach may provide insight into the actual goals of the child, who is safely responding based on the goals of another child. Indirect questioning methods were used mainly throughout the interviews. It allowed for an inductive approach to studying the goals of children generally since no 'answers' are provided which may limit or influence responses. The extent to which the remaining sets of questions were used was based on formative decisions made during the course of

collecting and analyzing interview data.

At the investigator's discretion, when children ceased to provide new responses, the mode of the interview shifted to direct questioning (theory testing). This approach was used to test the specific task value components of Eccles' model. In this approach, children were given scenarios and asked if it was likely that the child in the situation would participate in the mentioned recess activity. It is important to note here that children were still asked to report based on another child so as not to arouse anxiety and to limit as much as possible threats to the inaccuracy of responses. Scenarios were phrased according to one specific detail within each of the task value components. Children were asked for reasons that would support their answer if they did not volunteer such information. In this way, and over a series of interviews, it could be determined to what extent the value components accounted for choices in the hypothetical situations. This approach was not used in the beginning of the interview where the purpose was to elicit the children's own descriptive words about their perceptions. Direct questioning was used only when further information could no longer be gathered by indirect methods. This method illustrates a deductive approach since investigators were seeing how well children's responses mapped onto the components of the existing theory. In other words, children were being asked to verify or theorize about Eccles' theory itself.

The third, and final approach to questioning involved asking children about their own specific behaviours. As mentioned above, this can provoke anxiety on the part of the child. This approach was not followed with all children since it was

felt that it would arouse anxiety in children who were reluctant to respond. This approach was adopted since investigators felt that it would be a personal approach to questioning children about recess experiences. It was discovered during the study that many children responded according to their own personal recess experiences even when asked indirectly about other children. For these children, it is unlikely that this direct approach concerning their own recess behaviours aroused feelings of anxiety.

It was recognized as important to concentrate on the delivery of questions and to give particular attention to various interviewing skills such as expectations, communication, anxiety, and attention. Thus, a preliminary test of interview structure and length was conducted, prior to videotaped pilots, with two grade three children from a different school. The purpose of this was to develop and test interview structure prior to data collection.

Prior to conducting interviews for the main portion of the study, videotaped pilot interviews were conducted with three children. These children were randomly selected from those students for whom consent was received to participate in videotaped pilot interviews. Separate consent was required from parents for participation in pilot interviews and/or inclusion in the main portion of the study. A checklist of interview techniques was developed from the literature (Appendix B). The checklist was used to evaluate the quality of the pilot interviews, more specifically, how effective the interviewer was in conducting the interviews and adapting to various situations and responses encountered throughout the interviews. Both the principal investigator and a co-investigator

independently reviewed the videos using the checklist. The checklist was consulted and used by the investigators during the analysis of pilot interviews. In this manner, interview techniques were checked according to the criteria that appeared on the checklist. A meeting after the observation of each pilot video enabled investigators to discuss suggestions for improvements and necessary editing of the interview protocol. These suggestions were used to incrementally develop and improve interview protocol. The pilot interviews were also designed to develop and assess communication skills as recommended by Boggs and Eyberg (1990).

A grid was developed which served to track the substantive characteristics of the interview questions (Appendix C). By outlining the nature of each question on the grid, it was quickly discovered that most initial questions were slanted negatively (e.g. questions using situations where children did not take part, etc.). If undetected, this might have had a major impact on children's perceptions and apprehension of the interview questions. Items were revised to balance the approach. Videotaping also facilitated the detection of potential errors and/or inconsistent behaviours of the investigator and more importantly, the detection of signs of discomfort on the part of the child. Once the interview protocol and interview behaviours were developed to an acceptable level, the main portion of the study commenced.

The investigator was careful to avoid making the tone of the interviews evaluative by limiting the amount of evaluative feedback following children's responses. Care was taken to avoid providing children with the idea that what

they currently do at recess is inadequate or to suggest that they should pursue different activities. The interviews were kept as non-threatening as possible, so as not to take the fun out of recess. The aim was to have minimal effect on behaviour while trying to gain a thorough understanding of the recess environment.

A common method in qualitative studies is to review subjects' responses, write them up and allow subjects to read and review them for accuracy of interpretation. This procedure is often referred to as member checking (Gall, et al., 1996). In this way, member checking with children can present numerous problems. Member checking with children presented a problem in the study due to ethical and logistical concerns. It was discovered in pilot studies that it was necessary to devote 7 - 8 minutes to building rapport with children and communicating expectations for the interview. The context in which children gave the responses cannot be recreated. This threatens the accuracy of their recall to specific responses or details of their thought processes at the time of the interview. During the interviews, the investigator occasionally checked children's responses by asking them to expand on their thought, or the investigator would repeat the point to see if it was clearly understood. In some cases, children would clarify when the investigator did not rephrase all the relevant details or make correct interpretations.

Interviewer Preparation

A detailed set of steps was followed during the development of interview procedures. An extensive literature review was conducted on the important

considerations when interviewing children. This review consisted of information regarding developmental characteristics, cognitive and social cognitive considerations, language development, expectations, rapport, anxiety, attention, interview guidelines and checklists, development and structure of questions, recording the interview, sources of misinformation, and piloting testing the interview.

A significant portion of this study involved the development of a detailed interview protocol for interviewing children. Reviewing the literature on interviewing children provided information for the development of an interview checklist, interview goals, objectives, and techniques. This information was then used to pilot test interview protocol and techniques. Information regarding interview techniques was extracted and organized to continually guide the pilot testing process.

Children were asked at the beginning of each interview for permission to audio-record the interview. The purpose of audio recording was explained so that they clearly understood its purpose. This approach provided child with a choice with regards to recording, whereas they are denied that choice if the investigator starts recording without addressing the issue.

The self-report card that was used in the study, "Identification and assessment of culturally normal skills" (Watkinson & Causgrove Dunn, 1997), was also employed in this study to provide a relevant visual stimulus for the child. Children completed the self-report card (that is, they were asked to circle the activities they did at recess) at the beginning of the interview. This was an easy

and familiar task that attracted their interest and helped towards building rapport. Given the nature of this task, it was hoped by the investigators that this would give the child a sense of accomplishment early and encourage him or her to be actively involved as soon as possible. Once children completed the self-report card at the beginning of the interview it was placed out of sight to avoid distraction. Each child was told that we would come back to his or her self-report card at the end of the interview.

Boys' and girls' play behaviours often involve participation in different culturally normal skills. Cartoon drawings of culturally normal skills for each gender were shown to the children during each interview. Children were then asked why a child would do the activity and, then, why a child would not do the activity.

Interviews in the main portion of the study were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed. Transcription was completed by a professional typist. The advantages of having a professional transcribe interviews are countered by the disadvantages. A professional can transcribe interviews three to four times faster than a person with average typing skills. However, since the professional typist did not conduct the interviews, he or she is not as connected with the data or the children. In either case, it is important to replay the interview tapes and read along from the transcript to check for errors. The advantages of this process are two-fold; the investigator gets more familiar with the original audio-taped interviews and at the same time checks for inaccuracies. This is an important step that is not addressed in the current literature on interviewing techniques. When

this procedure is not employed, existing errors in transcribed interviews remain undetected and are consequently coded inaccurately.

Data Analysis

Results from the three methods of questioning (indirect, direct, and personal questioning) were analyzed together. These approaches to questioning were used to obtain children's goals in their own words. Together, these methods were determined to be the most effective to collect information regarding children's recess goals. Data analysis involved a three-step procedure. During the first step, following an inductive approach, themes that emerged from interview transcripts were coded and organized into a list and formed into logical categories. Management and coding of data were consistent with procedures specified by Rubin and Rubin (1995). Interviews can be coded at varying levels of specificity including words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and whole documents according to what is most important and interesting (McCracken, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1984). Transcripts were re-read several times to apply codes to categories and themes discovered in later transcripts to previously read transcripts. This process was repeated until all codes were applied to the appropriate sections of text for each of the interviews. The second step involved comparing and categorizing the emerging themes deductively into one of the four value components of Eccles' model. Themes that did not fit with these components of task value were organized separately. Categories and themes, both consistent and inconsistent with Eccles' task value components, were outlined on

a coding sheet (Figure 2, p. 34). Once the coding and categorizing of data was complete, the third step in this process involved determining if reasons for choices provided by the children, in their own words, were supported by the value components of Eccles' expectancy-value model.

The approach presented here is similar to one conducted by Jackson (1996) who used deductive and inductive approaches to analyze data with elite athletes. She interviewed elite athletes, representing seven sports, on their perceptions of flow state; as defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1975). At the beginning of this study, an interview guide was developed to use when interviewing athletes about flow states. After the interviews were conducted, raw data were organized, inductively, into themes. Following this inductive method, "raw data themes were categorized deductively into one of Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow dimensions or into a separate dimension if there was not an obvious match between the athlete's descriptions and one of these theoretical dimensions" (Jackson, 1996, p. 79). Jackson (1996) summarized the justification for this type of approach. She stated that "such a procedure was followed because the aims of the study were to understand how athletes experience flow (inductive) and to ascertain whether the athletes' experiences could be understood through the theoretical conceptualization of flow by Csikszentmihalyi (1990; deductive)" (p. 79). This approach is supported by Patton (1990) who stated that in evaluative methods "there is often a flow from inductive approaches to find out what the important questions and variables are (exploratory work), to deductive hypotheses aimed at confirming exploratory findings, then back to inductive analysis..." (p. 46).

When data are analyzed inductively, general conclusions are drawn from particular facts or from individual cases, whereas deductive analysis involves reasoning or drawing conclusions based on known facts or general principles. A common misconception among researchers is that the inductive approach applies only to qualitative methods and that the deductive approach applies only to quantitative methods. Sandelowski (1993) extended the notion that "although it is important for some purposes to make distinctions between qualitative and quantitative work, such distinctions cannot be made solely on the ground that qualitative research is inductive and quantitative research is deductive" (p. 217). This study uses qualitative methodology with both inductive and deductive analyses in an attempt to test the task value components of Eccles' theory. The same position has been presented by Hammersley (1992) who views the issue in terms of all research using both approaches, at least in broader definitions, whereby all research involves moving from ideas to data as well as data to ideas. Existing theory is the grounds for the investigation whereas, in purely inductive qualitative research (grounded theory) the theory is grounded in the data, and thereby evolves from it. An important consideration in this approach is based on the assumptions that one carries into the research setting, be it in a natural setting or in an artificial lab-like setting. Assumptions about the real world are difficult, if not impossible, to set aside when venturing into the research arena. The argument for qualitative methods being purely inductive is based on the belief that one can limit the creeping in of these assumptions. It is the presence of these assumptions that builds the argument that all research involves at least some quantity of both

inductive and deductive approaches. As described by Patton (1990) the use of inductive and deductive approaches in qualitative research varies along a continuum.

> As evaluation fieldwork begins, the evaluator may be open to whatever emerges from the data, a discovery or inductive approach. Then, as the inquiry reveals patterns and major dimensions of interest, the evaluator will begin to focus on verifying and elucidating what appears to be emerging, a more deductive approach to data collection and analysis (Patton, 1990, p. 194).

Theory testing in this study involved determining the extent to which value components of Eccles' expectancy-value theory explained children's choices at recess. To this end, only the task value components of the model were tested. Controversy exists regarding the level of testing which should occur with theory. Hammersley (1989) summarized this dilemma with differing views proposed by Merton (1957) and Glaser and Strauss (1967). Merton (1957), in trying to link sociological theory and research, suggested "to take an existing theory and... test small parts of it as rigorously as possible, usually via quantitative techniques" (Hammersley, 1989, p. 173). The argument by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is "that this frequently involves forcing data into pre-established theoretical categories, since the theory is taken as given and unchangeable. Moreover, the procedures integral to 'rigorous testing' militate against the development of better theory..." (Hammersley, 1989, p. 173). Glaser and Strauss's solution to this problem was in grounded theorizing meaning "the stimulation and development of theoretical ideas by the systematic investigation of the social world, usually by means of

qualitative methods" (Hammersley, 1989, p. 173). The complex nature of theories of motivation also makes testing all parts simultaneously a difficult procedure. At the individual level this process is very difficult indeed. The purpose of the approach used in his study is not to undermine the complexity of children's recess involvement, but to find evidence to explain and better understand it using current theoretical insight.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The rationale for this study arose from results of ongoing research being conducted by Watkinson and Causgrove Dunn (1997, 1999) and McKenzie et al. (1997) on children's recess engagement. Most of this research has been conducted with large groups of elementary schoolchildren. Yet, recess is a time of informal play opportunities where children are given the freedom to make their own individual choices regarding recess activities. Therefore, a need was identified to investigate individual children's goals for recess engagement. Eccles' et al. (1983) expectancy-value theory was chosen to guide this research since the achievement motivation model which presents this theory is a model of choice, originally developed for application in classroom settings.

Emerging Categories and Themes

The purpose of this investigation was to determine whether children described their own decisions about whether or not to participate in physical

activities at recess in terms of multiple goals or in achievement terms that are consistent with task value components of Eccles' model of achievement motivation. Task value components of Eccles' model include attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value and cost. The development of a coding sheet enabled investigators to organize the various categories and themes (Figure 2) and to then determine the extent to which children's recess choices were accounted for by Eccles' value components. The results include categories and themes that emerged from each of the three interview formats; indirect questioning, direct questioning (theory testing), and personal questioning. Interview excerpts are used from children in this study to provide examples of each of the categories and themes. All names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

Eccles' Task Value Components

- Attainment Value
  - Importance of doing well on the task
  - Self-schema
    - Gender
    - Peer group
    - Competence
- Intrinsic Value
  - Interest
  - Enjoyment
  - Liking
  - Boredom
- Utility Value
  - Functional
  - Affiliation with others
  - Ongoing activity
  - Time management
  - Practice
- Cost

Fear
Performance anxiety
Effort
Injury
Fighting
Rough play
Teasing
Cheating

Emerging Themes Linked to Task Values

Challenge
Fun

Constraints & Enablers

Exclusion/Rejection
Rules
Characteristics of the Environment

Processes

Goals
Planning
Deciding

Figure 2. Coding Sheet of Categories and Themes

Eccles' Value Components

Attainment Value

Eccles' et al. (1983) defined attainment value as the importance of doing well on the task, and also linked it "to the relevance of engaging in the task to confirm or disconfirm salient aspects of one's self-schema" (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992, p. 280). Findings indicated that children define their choices in achievement situations in terms consistent with attainment value. Support was provided for importance of doing well on the task and the contribution of achievement to self-

schema (Figure 3).

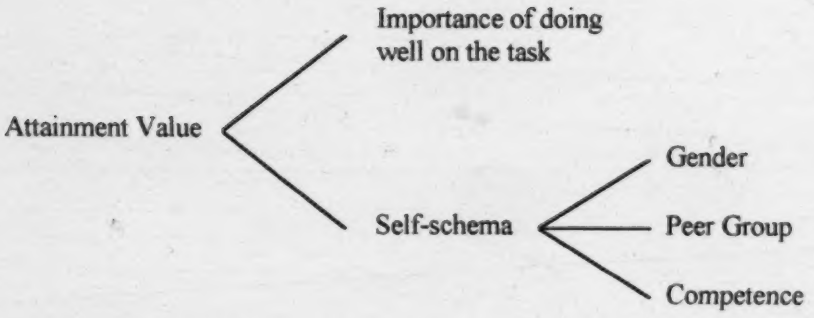

Figure 3. Attainment Value Themes

Importance of Doing Well on the Task

A portion of the interview methodology for this study involved direct questioning (theory testing). This sometimes involved providing hypothetical scenarios and asking whether or not the child in the given situation would do the mentioned activity. The children that were provided with the statement "Being good at climbing on the equipment is important to me" all confirmed that the child in question would likely choose to do that activity. When asked why it was important to be good at an activity children gave a variety of responses, including; to be the best at an activity and to be able to play with their friends who are good at an activity. Using the direct method, this child was questioned according to a completed hypothetical self-report form involving a girl who plays all the activities that her friends play even though she is not very good at them and she does not enjoy them.

Interviewer: *Why would she do these activities with her friends even though she doesn't enjoy them?*
Christina: *Maybe she wants to be as good as her friends.*

Interestingly, children also suggested that this aspect could be an important indicator of choice when activities are perceived as not being important. Again, using the direct questioning method, a child, in response to the hypothetical statement "It is not important that I can catch a ball" about another child, replied that she thought the child in the scenario would not choose to do the activity. When asked 'why?' she responded:

Jennifer: *Because they don't think it is important to them and they don't think that they need to do it.*

Activities are important to children for a variety of reasons but the importance of doing a task, or doing it well, appears to confirm the notion of attainment value influencing task choice. The relative importance or unimportance of an activity may override other aspects of a task such as enjoyment and competence.

Self-Schema

Aspects of self-schema, according to the results of this study, include gender roles, peer group and competence.

Gender appears to be very important in influencing children's decisions to engage in or avoid activities at recess time. Many investigators have reported differences in boys' and girls' recess play (Beth-Halachmy, 1980; Evans & Roberts, 1987; Faucette et al., 1995; Kraft, 1989; Pellegrini, 1989; Sarkin,

McKenzie, & Sallis, 1997; Young, 1985). Children in this investigation reported differences in the play behaviours of the girls and boys in their class. Participants described certain activities as being typical of the boys while others are seen as girls' activities. When describing the difference between boys' and girls' play one girl said:

Heidi: *They're more into war and boys' things and this is more like a girl's game or something.*

The second difference is that in many cases the boys and girls avoid playing together. As one boy stated:

Albert: *Well, usually the girls don't like playing games with us [boys], and we don't like playing with them...*

A statement by a girl in the class confirmed the previous observation.

Interviewer: *Do you see many girls playing football?*
Alyson: *None of the girls do. Well, ...me and my friends... we just play it even if the boys are playing it.*
Interviewer: *Even if the boys are playing it?*
Alyson: *We still play it but some girls don't play it just because the boys are.*

Another girl described an incident where boys and girls entered into conflicts over space on the playground:

Arlene: *Sometimes we go into the place that they [boys] are and they don't really want us [girls] there and they start attacking us.*

From this, it is apparent that some boys were aware of the presence of girls which consequently influences their recess behaviours. It is interesting, however, to note that some of the boys did not notice the activities that the girls are involved in at recess.

Brian: *Well, I never really see the girls in my class, not at recess.*
Interviewer: *Do you have any idea what the girls do out there?*
Brian: *Not really.*

For this boy, the conflicts discussed above did not seem to affect his choices at recess since he was generally oblivious to the actions of the girls in his class.

From the above excerpts, it is clear that children's interactions with members of their own or the opposite gender and engagement in gender appropriate/inappropriate activities is a basis for decisions about recess. The attainment value of a particular task is increased if it is appropriately gendered.

As seen above, children identified readily with members of their own gender. The same applied to children's peer groups. In studies of children's recess participation by Watkinson and Causgrove Dunn (1997), children were studied in relation to their classmates. It is this particular peer group or cohort that is most likely to have a significant impact on children's recess behaviours (Young, 1985). Results of the current study indicated that children sought to confirm or disconfirm their self-schema in relation to their peer group (classmates). Many reasons that children provided for engaging in or avoiding an activity depended partially on the age or peer group with which the children were associated. Girls in the class had a tendency to play with other girls in their class and sometimes avoided playing with other children, especially those in the lower grades. One girl in particular describes the relationship between a set of skills and the peer groups involved.

Interviewer: *So what are some reasons that they [hypothetical children] do not like jumping down...*

Sonya: *...sometimes ...you see your friends are doing something else instead of jump down... jump down is really stupid now cause I think the other kids are doing better stuff than me, so I'll just do something else for a change.*

Interviewer: *That those kids are doing probably?*

Sonya: *Other kids are doing.*

Interviewer: *Yeah, so you'd probably do those things?*

Sonya: *Yeah, because maybe jumping up and down, you see lots of younger kids doing it, instead of the older kids, and you want to be like the older kids, cause you're an older kid.*

Thus, jumping up and down is not in her repertoire of recess activities since it was an activity typical of children in the lower grades. In other words, the task lacked attainment value and thus was not a strong choice. It is interesting to note here that even though we discussed a hypothetical child, she answered in relation to her own experiences. The reasons she provided to play were indeed affected by children in lower and higher grades.

It was reported that girls tend to persist more than the boys do when their snow forts get wrecked. Identical reports were given by a boy and a girl claiming that the older children intentionally wrecked their snow forts, while the younger children wrecked the snow forts unintentionally by claiming the snow chunks to use for a project of their own. In the following excerpt, Sonya provided ways in which members of peer groups influenced the boys' play opportunities in snow forts.

Sonya: *The boys [classmates] like being in snow forts, so they usually build a fort or if one gets wrecked they'll try to rebuild it or move to another one.*

Interviewer: *So sometimes their forts get wrecked? Who wrecks the forts out there on the playground?*

Sonya: *Usually the bigger boys, and there's a lot of snow chunks on the baby playground where my younger brother and sister and her friends like to play and they're trying to get snow chunks off [the forts], so that's part of the wrecking...*

Peer groups, as seen above, influence children's decisions. Sonya indicated that her choices with regards to jumping up and down are mediated by the children that are doing those types of activities. Since children that are generally involved in jumping up and down are not in her peer group, she avoids participation in these activities. Members of other peer groups also have an impact on recess activity involvement. With so many children on the playground at one time, it seems significant that children describe their recess choices with regards to members of various peer groups. The class members, as a unit, seem to be a particularly influential group.

Competence is the third aspect of self-schema that emerged in this study. Competence in this context is described as children's physical competence related to skill level and ability in physical activities. In this investigation, skill level is defined as the level of proficiency whereas ability refers to the distinction between being able to or not able to successfully complete a task. It has been argued that recess is an achievement setting. Skill level and ability would have an influence on the decisions that children make regarding physical activity choices at recess if achievement related behaviours are valued in this setting. Skill level is linked to choice that is evidenced in the following excerpt from one of the female participants.

Interviewer: *Do other kids in your class play [tag]...?*
Heidi: *Well... we have some kids... in my class [who] are really good at running so they like playing tag.*

This suggests that being really good at running is the reason why some children choose to participate in an activity where competence in this domain is necessary to be successful. Confirming this skill-success relationship, one of the boys in the class suggested a child would want to catch a ball at recess, because:

Brian: *Well, they'd probably maybe want to be able to catch a ball so they can participate in other games where you have to catch a ball.*

When the skills of a particular activity are not in a child's repertoire, children often compensate or employ coping mechanisms to be able to participate without demonstrating incompetence, as was seen in the following excerpt.

Interviewer: *So let's just say that a kid can't catch a ball very well and he wants to be included... he wants to play soccer-baseball. Do the other children let him play?*
Arlene: *Yeah.*
Interviewer: *Yeah? Even though he's not very good?*
Arlene: *Hm-hm.*
Interviewer: *How would he play in that game... where would he play?*
Arlene: *Well, maybe he would only kick the ball. Or maybe... he'd just pick the ball up instead of catching it.*

The choice to play in this situation using this coping mechanism would probably depend on the level of acceptance by peers. An individual's ability will affect, to a large extent, the choices that he or she makes. The relationship between choice and ability in this situation is interdependent since a child who is not able to participate effectively in an activity therefore does not have the luxury of choosing to do that activity. Children in this study expressed this notion whereby

their ability, or more accurately, their inability did not permit them to make choices toward participation in certain activities.

Interviewer: *What are a couple of your least favourite things to do at recess?*
Albert: *[looking at self-report form] Probably I have to say the worst thing, probably that would be hang upside down and crawling through a tunnel, and the monorails and wrestle and cartwheel because I don't even know how to do it...or headstand, somersaults, dance.*

This was confirmed a few minutes later in the interview when asked if he ever participated in activities that were not his favourites even though his friends were doing them.

Interviewer: *What if some of your friends are doing some of these activities that aren't your favourites... do you ever do them then?*
Albert: *Usually I do it about twice or three times and then I get used to it, except I usually don't do a somersault, headstand, or cartwheel, or dance and that.*
Interviewer: *Why don't you do those?*
Albert: *I can't do headstands or a handstand or a somersault.*

This concept of ability and choice was also supported by one of the girls when asked about a least favourite activity:

Interviewer: *So why is playing football your least favourite?*
Alyson: *Because I can't do it.*

Skill level and ability are aspects of competence that seem to have a profound influence on children's choices. Skill level is sometimes the key factor influencing choice since, as indicated above, children like to do activities that they are good at. Children who are less skilled than others often use coping mechanisms or change their role in a game or activity in order to participate. Task

attainment value is thus reflected in statements expressing the need to choose activities in which one can demonstrate competence, or can avoid demonstrating incompetence through the coping mechanisms available.

Intrinsic Value

The second component of Eccles' model is intrinsic value, a construct similar to intrinsic motivation as defined by Deci & Ryan (1985) and Vallerand et al. (1997). Eccles and her colleagues defined intrinsic value as the enjoyment an individual gets from engaging in an activity or the subjective interest the individual has for the activity (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). When an activity or task is high in interest value, Eccles and her colleagues argued that an individual will be more intrinsically motivated to exhibit that behaviour (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). There are positive psychological consequences associated with a task that an individual values intrinsically (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Themes resulting from this investigation that fit into the category of intrinsic value included interest, enjoyment, liking and boredom (Figure 4).

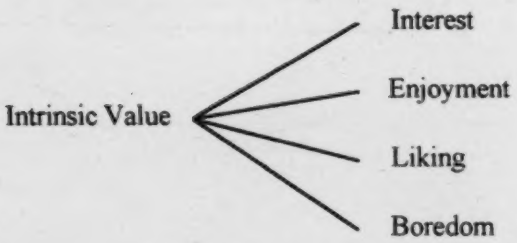

Figure 4. Intrinsic Value Themes

Interest and enjoyment are included in Eccles' description of intrinsic value. Liking and boredom were also included in this category since they are strongly related to the construct of intrinsic value.

Interest

When children perceive activities as having high interest value they are more intrinsically motivated to participate in the activity. Interest in relation to gender was illustrated in the following passage.

Interviewer:	*Why do you think the boys are doing those activities [snow tag or sand tag]?*
Joseph:	*Well, maybe because they're more interested in the game than girls are...*
Interviewer:	*So why would the boys probably be more interested than the girls, do you think?*
Joseph:	*Well, mostly because girls usually get to the swings first.*
Interviewer:	*So does that mean the girls are more interested in the swings than they are in sand tag?*
Joseph:	*Yeah, snow tag yeah.*

It is apparent that interest can take on many different meanings and therefore, inherently diverse means of motivating an individual to engage in a task.

Enjoyment

When interviewing the children about enjoyment it was enlightening to hear how they described their experiences. The following excerpts are overflowing with enjoyment that undoubtedly enhanced their intrinsic motivation for continued participation.

Brian:	*Well, it feels cool when you're like doing the three-sixties.*
Interviewer:	*You can do a three-sixty out of a swing? So it feels cool. Which part feels cool?*
Brian:	*Like just when you're spinning around.*
Interviewer:	*What's it like to land?*
Brian:	*Difficult.*
Interviewer:	*Difficult? But you still enjoy that?*
Brian:	*Yeah.*

In the next excerpt, swinging is reported to be enjoyable for similar reasons. The feeling associated with the activity ('vertigo') is described a little more clearly which provides a more complete account the link between enjoyment and the activity.

Interviewer:	*Why is swinging one of your favourite activities?*
Joseph:	*Well, it's sort of fun because it's nice to see when you go up and down, like when you go higher. It always feels cool when you see the ground, the playground, and it seems like you're going down and back up, especially when you put your head really back and the back looks upside down.*
Interviewer:	*So what does that feel like?*
Joseph:	*Well, really cool like, sort of like you're flying.*

In these examples, the feeling associated with the activity is linked to enjoyment. Children described some activities as feeling 'cool' such as swinging, ziplines, hanging upside down, and doing tricks as seen in the first example. Enjoyment is unique in the way that it is experienced while doing the activity. Children also reported liking activities for various reasons and indeed, in many ways, enjoyment and liking are closely linked.

Liking

Liking was one of the most commonly cited reasons why children engage in activities at recess time. Children reported liking activities for numerous reasons, a sample of which will be given in this section. In a later section, liking will be discussed in conjunction with concomitant reasons to provide a more complete understanding of how liking contributes to children's activity choices. When questioned about another child's activity patterns with balls at recess time the following reasons were provided.

Interviewer: *What are some other reasons that he probably doesn't play with balls at recess time?*

David: *Well, maybe because he doesn't like playing with balls. He's got other activities that he likes to do, like play games with friends, climb on equipment, hang upside down. Most of the time I don't like climbing on equipment because only when I have to I climb on equipment because it's just, like going up and down equipment, climbing on equipment, running around equipment, is not very, but I like ziplines, I'm actually pretty good.*

As seen in a previous excerpt, this child too resorts to personal reasons regarding recess activity even though he is asked about another, hypothetical child. He initially provides numerous reasons why another child does not play with balls but switches to provide reasons of his own.

In the following excerpt, this girl describes reasons why she does not like playing tag at recess.

Interviewer: *So why would tag be one of your least favourite activities?*

Heidi: *Because I don't really like chasing or getting chased because sometimes in tag there's no "times" and then you get really tired and you can't run any more.*

The reasons she does not like tag are linked to a number of other themes and categories that have also emerged from the results of this study.

Boredom

The following quote shows an indirect relationship between activities that are boring and those that are interesting, suggesting that activities that children found interesting were much less likely to be perceived as boring.

Interviewer: *So what makes the other activities [climb on cargo nets, climb on playground equipment] better than jumping up and down?*

Sonya: *Well, it's probably because they give you more of a chance to do stuff 'cause jump[ing] up and down all you do is... get on this little thing and then you jump down and you walk up and you jump down and you get bored with that really quickly. Climbing up and down the cargo nets... that would be more interesting because you could try different things, like jumping off or sliding down.*

The activities that she suggested as being more interesting than jumping up and down involved a variety of skills or moves.

Themes that emerged under the category of intrinsic value were referenced numerous times during the interviews, the most common being the theme, liking. As with most of the themes, there are many underlying reasons why activities are interesting, enjoyable, likeable, or boring. Whatever the reasons, it appears that intrinsic value associated with tasks is important in the choices that children make regarding participation in recess activities.

Utility Value

The third task value component of Eccles' achievement model is utility value, which is defined according to how a task relates to future goals (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Results of this study yielded many themes according to utility value (Figure 5).

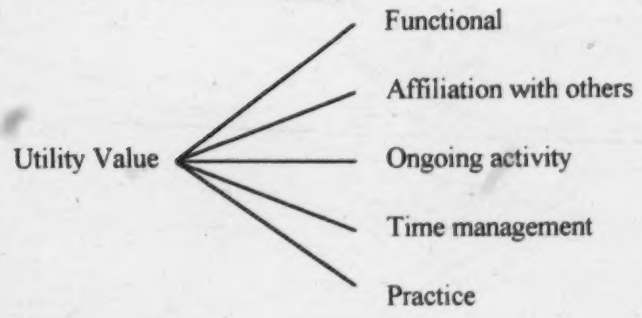

Figure 5. Utility Value Themes

There is a relationship between utility and intrinsic components in that, an individual may engage in a particular task to meet future goals even though the individual may not be interested in the task in and of itself. The utility component, then, "...captures more 'extrinsic' reasons for engaging in the task, such as doing a task not for its own sake but to reach some desired end-state" (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992, p.280). There are implications from the very definition of utility value that may provide insights into the immediate and long-term goals of children at recess.

Functional

When an activity is functional in nature it is engaged in as a requirement to meet the demands of some other task, for example, running to be the first on the swing set. In this case swinging is the desired outcome, while running is the functional activity that is not engaged in for its own sake but for the ulterior motive of reaching the swing set before anyone else does. Using the indirect question method, the child in the excerpt below provided a variety of reasons why children run at recess. When asked why children run at recess many of the responses were consistent with a functional aspect for participation.

Interviewer: *So why do children run at recess time?*
David: *Well, to play some sort of game, or maybe he was just running, because you know how when you get out for recess you want to run to the playground, kind of be the first people there just so you can join the games as quick as you can and get games started.*

In this example, running served a functional capacity. Running enabled children to get games started and to join in a game as quickly as possible. In the first part of the excerpt, David mentioned that children often run at recess "to play some sort of game". The functional aspect was illustrated in that running is often done within the realm of a game or an activity. Oftentimes, a skill is performed within a game or activity for the purpose of carrying out the other goals of that game or activity. When shown a cartoon drawing of a girl bouncing a ball Paul provided the following response.

Interviewer: *What are some reasons that a child might do this at recess time?*
Paul: *Maybe she was playing basketball.*
Interviewer: *So she's bouncing a ball, so it could be part of a game.*

Paul: *Basketball. Maybe she's a goalie and she's playing soccer.*

Heidi, in the following interview segment, provided an account of a game, which involved a number of playground equipment skills. The skills used in this activity were necessary since Heidi and her friends chose to play on the playground equipment.

Interviewer: *What kind of games do you play with your friends?*
Heidi: *Like we play the mother and the children game, and that uses like sliding down poles and swinging on tire swing and climbing up on the equipment.*

Clearly these skills she listed were necessary to play this game with her friends, but the game itself is where the relevance lies. These skills are a means by which the activity can be engaged in, which is the ultimate goal.

Affiliation with others

Children reported playing a certain game or engaging in a task simply to be with their peers. In this regard the affiliation with others is the key motivation or goal for participation. Results indicated that affiliation was linked to being with friends, playing with others and playing alone. There is a fundamental difference between being with friends and playing with others in that a friend is someone who is held in a different regard than other children on the playground.

Playing with friends was one of the most common responses reported by children, which influenced their recess decisions. Arlene gave the following response after she indicated playing a game with friends was one of her favourite activities.

Interviewer: *Playing a game with your friends. Why is that one of your favourites?*

Arlene: *Because I sort of like playing games with my friends because I like my friends.*

In the next example, a direct questioning method was used. Brian was presented with a self-report form belonging to a hypothetical child from another school. The form contained a number of circled recess activities that the child and her friends normally do.

Interviewer: *So here we have a sheet that I got from a student at a different school. She... plays all the activities that her friends play... even though she isn't very good at them and she doesn't enjoy doing those activities. So why do you think she'd do these activities anyway, even if she isn't good at them?*

Brian: *Just to be with her friends, like her best friends...*

As suggested by Brian, not being good at the activities and not enjoying them were overridden by the decision to be with friends.

In the following passages it was clear that children's decisions were also made based on their affiliation with or playing with other children. The differentiation with the previous theme was that here, children did not specifically state "being with their friends". It is possible that children in the following excerpts are referring to their friends, but they did not state this formally.

Interviewer: *Why do you think they play in groups most of the time?*

Heidi: *Because it's more fun to play in groups. There's other children to play with instead of just yourself. You can do more things with other people.*

In the following excerpt Sonya relayed the significance of playing with, and indeed being around, other children.

Sonya: *Some children don't play by themselves because they think it's uncool or something. Like some people have to stay cool.*

Interviewer: *What does it mean to be cool?*

Sonya: *Well, like, stay with a group and just do what they do even if they don't even notice you're there, you just stay with a group you think is the best.*

The group's lack of awareness of the individual seems significant in this situation. Being unnoticed and being with the group, according to Sonya, is more important than playing alone.

When children choose to play alone they do so for various reasons. They may actually wish to play alone, but often children play alone as a result of the potential consequences of playing with others. Two such reasons may be; wanting to avoid demonstrations of low skill level or the consequential embarrassment of playing with others. Thus, playing by themselves may meet a short term goal of avoiding negative experiences that sometimes accompany group affiliation or group play.

Interviewer: *Why do children play by themselves sometimes at recess?*

Sarah: *Maybe because they don't want to play with their friends, or what their friends are doing, they don't want to do. So they just go and play by themselves.*

In the above excerpt, Sarah stated that children sometimes do not like what their friends are playing. In the following quote, Sonya suggested many more reasons why a child might not like the activities that his or her friends are doing, some not related to the activity itself.

Interviewer: *Why do you think kids play by themselves at recess?*

Sonya: *Sometimes I get annoyed at the slide so I go off and play by myself... because... sometimes it gets too loud or too rough over there, or maybe they start fighting all of a sudden and I don't like that so I just go away and play by myself. It's*

better.

Playing alone also seems to be related to skill level as seen in the following excerpt.

Interviewer:	*Do kids mostly catch a ball by themselves, or with other people?*
Arlene:	*...yeah, they do both.*
Interviewer:	*So if they're not very good at it, do you think they'd do it by themselves or with other kids?*
Arlene:	*By themselves*
Interviewer:	*Why do you think that might be?*
Arlene:	*Because maybe they don't want other people to see them.*

In this case, the presence of others seems to be less than desirable when ball catching skills are not well developed.

Ongoing activity

An ongoing activity, as it was discovered, is an activity in which children participate during consecutive recess periods. There is a specific purpose or goal for the activity. The activity and the goal, therefore, are not separate as in some of the above themes. In this case the choice of activity relates to future goals and participation for its own sake. In the following excerpt it is clear that this child had a definite goal with other children toward a task, one of his favourites at recess time.

Interviewer:	*Why is building a snow fort or playing with the snow chunks... why is that one of your favourite things?*
Albert:	*Well, first thing we can't build a snow fort, that's one of the school rules. Secondly, the reason I gather the ice chunks is we're going to all smush them except we have to have lots we're gonna have the biggest one stay at the top and, and we're gonna try, after everything else is built into these big*

balls, we plan to smush the biggest one and make that the head, and we're making a big snow man. And we've almost got all the snowballs in the whole playground and now we're working on the baby playground, and we're gathering up right beside the slide?

Interviewer: *So how long are you working at this kind of a thing?*
Albert: *Every recess.*
Interviewer: *And for how many days do you think you've been doing it now?*
Albert: *Probably about a week.*

Obviously, some activities, projects or games merit participation over a series of recess periods. There seems to be a strong indication that children's motivation to engage in activities over numerous recess periods is mediated by their goals for those activities. Such an activity also reflects a longer term commitment than was often presented in children's responses.

Time management

The theme of time management arose unexpectedly. The time available for recess is a limiting factor in the number of things in which children can participate or the amount of time in which they can engage in a given activity. As noted by Pellegrini (1995) children's activity patterns may vary depending on the time available for recess. To compensate for this, children reported running to get from place to place in order to avoid wasting recess time. Running in this circumstance serves two purposes, a functional purpose in that they use running to get to another activity and a time management strategy to budget the time available.

Interviewer: *Do a lot of children in your class run at recess time?*
Albert: *Yeah, a lot of them run just to get places.*
Interviewer: *Just to get from...*

Albert: *Because they don't want to waste their recess.*

The point of wasting recess time here is very interesting. Not only does running serve a functional capacity with regards to getting from one place to another, but it also is undertaken for a broader goal of not wasting recess time. From this reason, it seems that some children value recess and use running as a way to get the most out of the time available to them. Clearly, the use of walking for such transportation was not perceived of as an efficient use of time. Running, on the other hand in Eccles' terms, has utility value.

Practice

Practice relates to skill level and ability. Some children practice the skills that are inherent in certain games or activities so that they can get better at them. Others practice simply to be able to perform a demanding skill or activity. Many of the reasons given for practicing were for activities that required the use of a ball (i.e. catching, throwing and kicking). In the following excerpt, Heidi describes how she practiced to get over an ability deficit.

Interviewer: *Let's take an example of a kid who's not very good at doing an activity... why do you think they keep trying to do that activity even if they're not good at it?*
Heidi: *Like before I couldn't do the rings so I kept on doing it every summer, kept on trying, kept on trying, and now I can do them.*
Interviewer: *Okay.*
Heidi: *So I just kept trying until I could do them and now I can do them.*

Practicing enabled Heidi to eventually negotiate the rings successfully, thus

adding to her repertoire of recess activities and enhancing her capacity to choose. It is apparent again here that when asked a question about an anonymous child she chose to answer based on her own experience.

Utility value takes on many forms and relates to aspects of the task that are not easily explained by the other task value components. However, the other task value components (attainment value, intrinsic value, and cost) seem to be clearly related. The way children perceive tasks as relating to their future goals is key in determining the usefulness of certain activities. Evidence of children having goals for recess was apparent throughout the themes discussed in this section.

Cost

The fourth of Eccles' task value components is cost. Cost is associated with all the negative aspects of engaging in an activity. "These include anticipated emotional states (e.g. performance anxiety and fear or both failure and success) as well as the amount of effort that will be necessary to succeed at the task" (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992, p. 280). Children contemplating the cost of an activity might consciously or unconsciously say to themselves "What do I have to give up or risk by participating in this activity?" If a child perceives the activity as having negative aspects, he or she then decides whether participation is worth the associated costs. If the perceived costs are too high participation is unlikely. However, if the costs are manageable the probability of participation is greater. In such a case, children 'put up with' costs to experience the more enjoyable aspects of the task. The following is a good example to illustrate a cost associated with

playing during the winter months. After describing all the ways in which he can negotiate the zipline, David gave the following account of why he sometimes does not do it.

Interviewer:	*So you're good at the zipline?*
David:	*Yeah, I'm good at zipline.*
Interviewer:	*Is that... the reason why you do it?*
David:	*Yeah, but I only do it when I can do it without my hands getting frostbite.*
Interviewer:	*Oh, okay.*
David:	*'Cause with the mittens on, it's really hard to do. I tried going there and bouncing back but I just fell flat on my face.*
Interviewer:	*Oh, so you slipped off.*
David:	*'Cause mittens are very slippery and that's metal and that's slippery and I can't do that with my bare hands because my hands will get frostbite and freeze.*

Despite the positive dimension of being good at an activity, the negative aspect of frostbite was sufficient to terminate continued participation.

Results yielded many themes associated with cost including fear, performance anxiety, effort, injury, fighting, rough play, teasing, and cheating (Figure 6).

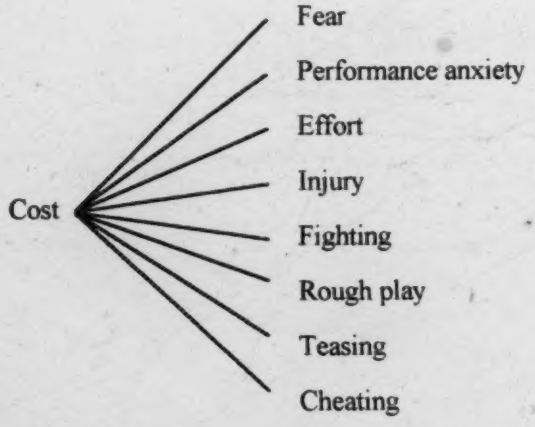

Figure 6. Cost Value Themes

Fear

Fear is a natural human response to threatening and unfamiliar situations. When humans experience fear, it is generally an unpleasant experience which we more often than not, seek to avoid. Results of this study yielded two types of fear which included fear of heights and fear of failure.

A child with a fear of heights will not include various areas of the playground equipment in his or her repertoire of recess activities since they are concerned with their own abilities to perform safely in a particular circumstance. Resulting from a discussion of practice and being good at activities, the following conversation arose.

Interviewer: *Are there certain activities that children can't do if they're not good at them?*

Jennifer: *Well, yeah, sort of. Like you can't climb high things like if you're afraid of heights... you shouldn't climb things that are high.*

The fear of heights seems to be the deciding factor in this case despite clear evidence of the child's ability to climb on high things. It seems likely that a fear of heights may override desires to climb even if the child possesses the necessary skills.

Fear of failure is related to not demonstrating the necessary skills to be successful at an activity, and is thereby influenced by skill level and related to the attainment value of a task. This is usually in relation to performances by other children. This is seen in the following excerpt where questioning is done indirectly to discuss an anonymous female child.

Interviewer: *So why do you think she might not run at school, but she*

does run at home?

Albert: *Well, another child that she knows that runs faster than her and she doesn't want to get embarrassed by somebody out-running her.*

In this reason, the fear of being outperformed by another person determines the location for participation in running. It would seem that for this girl, running is an achievement task whereby being the fastest runner is the desired outcome. The cost of losing to another child results in embarrassment.

Performance Anxiety

Performance anxiety is related to fear of failure but it can also be related to things like embarrassment and feeling threatened in the presence of others. Such feelings dampen one's will to perform the activity as they probably ould if others were not present.

Interviewer: *So why is dance one of your least favourite things to do at recess?*

Sonya: *Well, when you start dancing and the other people will start staring at you and... you get nervous and maybe... no other people are dancing with you... you can be doing a really nice dance to you but other people think it's really bad.*

Consequently, she reported that she does not dance on the playground at recess, even if there aren't others present.

Effort

As noted previously, in the context of Eccles' theory, effort relates to success in a task. Effort is often perceived as a favourable attribute, especially when it comes to schoolwork. However, the effort necessary to do some activities

at recess can be a discouraging factor affecting participation. Children linked effort to energy in two ways, which included high and low physiological demands. The perception of these is dependent on the individual. To some children, high effort is desirable whereas to some it is a cost that is prohibitive. In the latter, this usually means choosing to not perform the activity. Using a direct method (theory testing), Brian was asked whether or not the child described in the following quote would participate in the mentioned activity; "I really get tired when I run around a lot in games like tag and soccer". He responded affirmatively to the notion of effort.

Interviewer:	*Why do you think they'd do... [tag and soccer] even though they get really tired?*
Brian:	*Like you have to work really hard like to get the ball in soccer, like running all the way down the field and stuff.*
Interviewer:	*So is that a good thing or a bad thing?*
Brian:	*Good.*
Interviewer:	*Yeah... so some children like to work hard?*
Brian:	*Yeah.*

In this example it is desirable to work hard to accomplish the task.

Physiological responses to bouts of high effort can also work to constrain activity levels. Therefore, physiological factors are often the deciding factor influencing continued participation in an activity. Success in tag depends partly on an individual's physiological capacity to run continuously. Often children establish rules that make such games manageable such as calling 'times' or allocating a 'time out spot' to rest without getting tagged. The costs associated with physiological limits are seen in the following excerpt. In response to indirect questioning, Paul describes one of the reasons why children do not run at recess.

Paul: *...why I wouldn't run, because you're all out of breath, like just playing a big game of tag, don't want to run.*
Interviewer: *So is that a good or a bad thing, being out of breath?*
Paul: *Bad.*

As seen in the following excerpt, there are negative as well as positive experiences associated with being tired:

Interviewer: *"I really get tired when I run around a lot in games like tag and soccer."*
Joseph: *I think that would be true because those really are a way to burn your energy.*
Interviewer: *So what's it like when you burn your energy?*
Joseph: *Well, it's like you get tired because you don't have that much energy in you left, so rest a little while to gain up.*
Interviewer: *So is getting tired, is that a good thing or a bad thing?*
Joseph: *Well, sort of good to get your energy exercised. And a little bit bad because you can get crabby when you get tired a lot.*

In the following excerpt there is a need to balance the amount of effort for the activity to be fun in a game of tag. Being "it" in tag involves a lot of running to tag those being chased. The interviewer is in fact questioned on his threshold for exerting effort and having fun in the activity.

David: *...like would you like being "it" chasing just four people and being "it" the whole time?*
Interviewer: *No.*
David: *No, I don't think anybody would, so there needs to be at least, well, at least six or seven to, because if you're chasing after five people it's a bit easier to tag them.*

In this case, too much effort detracted from the fun of the activity. Having more players likely increases the chances of tagging someone, that is of course, if they are not all faster than the person who is "it".

Injury

As well as incurring some type of injury, this category includes things such as getting hurt and experiencing pain. Decisions to engage in or avoid activities are sometimes determined by the risk of injury. Alyson described some of the reasons why football is not one of her favourite activities.

Interviewer: *Any other reasons why this [football] is one of your least favourites?*
Alyson: *Yeah, because people tackle you.*
Interviewer: *And what's that like?*
Alyson: *It's bad because you usually get a bloody nose or a black eye.*

Negative experiences associated with an injury as described above can override positive motivations for participation. The cost of participation is simply not worth the risk, even when weighed against the benefits.

Fighting

Children generally do not like getting into fights because of the many negative consequences involved. These might include getting in trouble, others not wanting to play with them anymore, and getting hurt. However, fights among children are somewhat inevitable and seem to have implications for how children cope in their social relationships and how these affect their recess experiences.

Interviewer: *How do fights start on the playground?*
Alyson: *Well, usually the fight starts if say, say if somebody - like it's usually on the slide that happens - usually people pull them down and you're supposed to tag them once you pull them down on the ground, and then say if they didn't tag you and they kept doing it, and you'd say, oh, no, you're not it, and then the person would usually get mad because she would think she was it but she wasn't.*

The vividness of this description seems to describe an actual fight that happened on the slides.

Rough Play

The inclination of some children is to play rough with others during recess. As seen with fighting, rough play can influence children's decision making in activities that possess such negative characteristics.

Interviewer:	*... a girl at another school ... reported ... that she was really good at running... But at recess time we noticed... that she never does activities that involve running. Can you think of any reasons why she might not do it?*
Paul:	*Maybe she doesn't like them. She likes running and she doesn't like playing games like tag.*
Interviewer:	*So what is it about a game like tag that she might not like.*
Paul:	*Like when people... tag you and they like push you.*
Interviewer:	*Instead of just touching, they push you, and what might happen?*
Paul:	*You could fall off the equipment.*

The negative consequences associated with rough play affect many children's decisions to avoid play in certain activities or areas of the playground.

Teasing

Just as children do not like to get into fights or be handled roughly by others, most children have a strong aversion to being teased. Getting teased often hurts children's feelings and to avoid such episodes children tend to leave the setting. Their wishes to play in an activity may be affected by someone in the area who is teasing them. Some children choose to play alone to avoid episodes of

teasing from other children. Paul relays an account of a member of the class who is often teased by other children. This has a profound effect on aspects of his social play at recess.

Interviewer:	*Why do you think the children play by themselves during recess?*
Paul:	*Well, like David, most people think he's a nerd.*
Interviewer:	*So what does that mean? Does he play with other people, or does he play by himself?*
Paul:	*No, because they just tease him.*
Interviewer:	*Really? So - if he gets teased, then does he go on and do things by himself. Is that what you mean?*
Paul:	*Yeah.*

As a result of being teased, children often seek to avoid the situation even if it means playing alone. Results of a study by Rose and Asher (1999) "revealed that even in a mild conflict situation with a friend, there was a link between children's level of acceptance and their tendency to adopt antisocial goals and strategies" (p. 77). Teasing is seen to be a cost that might be too high to pay and may result in the antisocial goals of withdrawal.

Cheating

When children cheat, the game or the activity becomes unpredictable. Either someone does not follow the rules or they change them to compensate for an inability or unwillingness to play within the rules. This often leads to children not liking the activity which can eventually lead to participation in another activity and maybe not wanting to play with the 'cheater' anymore.

Interviewer:	*[looking at self-report form of an anonymous child] Why do you think this kid doesn't do any activities with balls?*
Albert:	*Maybe he just doesn't like to play with balls.*

Interviewer: *Can you think of another reason, or another way to say that he doesn't like it?*

Albert: *Probably because... other children try to cheat when you play with them.*

Cheating, then, is also a reason why children sometimes do not like activities. The cost associated with cheating as seen in the above excerpt is sufficient to deter children from participating in a wide range of activities.

All of the above results were placed deductively in categories of task value as per Eccles' model of achievement motivation. That is, data consistent with Eccles' task value components were placed accordingly into each of these categories. The findings of this study indicate that children do in fact describe the majority of recess choices in terms consistent with these task value components. The remaining results of this study were categorized inductively into emerging themes from the interview data that did not fit with Eccles' task value components. The emerging themes from the data in this study that influenced children's choices at recess included challenge, fun, exclusion/rejection, rules characteristics of the environment, goals, planning and deciding.

Emerging Themes Linked to Task Value Components

Challenge and fun emerged as themes discovered to be closely linked to aspects of certain value components. These themes were coded separately since they account for so many of the reasons why children participate in activities at recess. Fun, for instance, was identified repeatedly in conjunction with all four

task value components as a reason for engaging in recess activities.

Challenge

Csikszentmihalyi (1975), who described challenge in relation to skill level, has studied challenge extensively in flow theory. When children are involved in activities where a balance is achieved between the child's skill and activity challenge, they often describe it as being fun (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). In this study, challenge as a theme emerged from children's own words. It is interesting that the word 'challenge' was not used in the questioning process until after it was mentioned by the children themselves.

Joseph:	*Well, like for snow tag or sand tag, it's very fun to like, it's like fun to try not to go on the sand but still try to get away from the person that's it. It's really fun.*
Interviewer:	*So is that an easy thing to do or kind of a hard thing to do?*
Joseph:	*Sort of a hard, challenging thing.*
Interviewer:	*So what if the game were really easy. So there wasn't much of a challenge. Would it be as fun then for children do you think?*
Joseph:	*I don't think so.*
Interviewer:	*No?*
Joseph:	*Because it's too easy... they would get away really easy and the person that was "it" wouldn't have a pretty good chance of getting anyone else.*
Interviewer:	*So if they couldn't catch anybody else, and they were "it" for a lot of the time, what would that be like for them.*
Joseph:	*I don't think it would be very fun for them.*
Interviewer:	*What kind of a challenge do they face?*
Joseph:	*They face like a really hard challenge like when it's the whole playground, it's a really hard challenge. But when it's just like you can't go on the sand or snow, it makes it a little bit easier for them.*
Interviewer:	*So there is a lot less space isn't there?*
Joseph:	*It sort of makes it even. Like normal to all the players because it gets easier for the person who's "it" and a little bit harder for the players that aren't "it".*

A discussion in a later section will deal with challenge as it relates to flow theory and with relation to other themes that arose from the interviews.

Fun

During analysis, the first inclination was to code fun with intrinsic value. Fun is indeed linked to enjoyment and interest but it is also reported over and over in connection to being with friends, being good at an activity, being with the boys or the girls, rough play, and challenge. This dilemma of how to appropriately categorize fun and enjoyment has been reported by Jackson (1996); Scanlan, Carpenter, Lobel, & Simons (1993); Scanlan & Simons (1992); and Wankel & Kreisel (1985a,b). Although work by Wankel & Kreisel (1985a,b) was conducted in the sport domain, their work holds some significance for more informal settings such as recess. In investigating enjoyment in youth sport, Wankel & Kreisel reported fun as the most common response for why children participate. This finding is consistent with the results of the current study. A review of literature completed prior to beginning this study highlighted the importance of the interpretative level of data analysis. It was necessary in the questioning process to probe beyond a response such as 'fun' in an attempt to discover the underlying meanings. The following excerpts illustrate how children understood fun and some of the factors that contributed to this construct.

Interviewer:	*So why do you think the girls or the boys... play on the [playground] equipment?*
Jennifer:	*Because it's fun and there's lots of stuff to do...*
Interviewer:	*What's fun about the equipment?*

Jennifer: *Well, the ziplines are fun cause you can play games on them and you can do challenges like go across the zipline on one hand.*
Interviewer: *Okay. So doing challenging things is fun?*
Jennifer: *Ya.*

Interviewer: *What else is fun about swinging?*
Joseph: *Well, especially in the spring, like when there's water under the swings, it's really funny, you try to stop the swing without getting your feet in the water. That's really fun too.*

These examples show some of the diversity associated with the theme fun. In the first excerpt fun is linked to challenge and competence on the playground equipment, whereas in the second excerpt, fun is described in relation to the enjoyment of trying to avoid getting wet in puddles underneath the swings. This diversity in the links that exist between fun and many of the other themes is support for categorizing fun separately.

Constraints and Enablers

Exclusion/rejection, rules, and characteristics of the environment emerged as themes that were categorized as constraints and enablers. These help determine the likelihood of participation in an activity. If these are favourable they afford or enable participation, if not, they act to constrain choice and actual participation.

Exclusion/Rejection

Children's choices about whether or not to participate in an activity are often self-determined. However, their peers who exclude or reject them for various reasons often mediate their choices. A diversity of reasons linked to

Eccles' task value components, as with fun, make categorization of this theme into any one component problematic. An interesting finding is that children also exclude themselves from activities if they feel that they do not have the physical skills or social relationships necessary to be successful in that setting. Following a direct line of questioning (theory testing), Joseph provided reasons why an anonymous girl would engage in an activity despite low competence and enjoyment.

Interviewer:	*Why do you think she'd do the activities that her friends are doing, even if she isn't good at them*
Joseph:	*Because she wouldn't want to be left out while her friends are playing, and she doesn't have a game to play because she isn't good at any of the games they are playing.*
Interviewer:	*...why do you think she does the activities if she doesn't enjoy them?*
Joseph:	*Well, maybe because her friends are playing them and she doesn't want to feel left out. Sort of the same reason as for the other one.*

In the following excerpt, David explains how running to be the first in a particular play area is a useful mechanism to avoid being rejected or excluded from activities by others.

Interviewer:	*...why would you want to do that [run to the playground] as quick as you can?*
David:	*Well, because some people might take the ...good places to play and if other people get there first, then, and they don't want you to join, you know.*

David also reported that his classmates and other children often exclude him from recess activities. This excerpt shows for him, in order to play in the 'good places' he has to get there first. Getting to a play area first seems to increase his chances of playing in that particular area of the playground. There is utility in arriving first

on the playground to avoid rejection. However, from the previous theme of teasing (an aspect of cost), Paul reported that David is often teased by other children. Despite David's attempts to get to the playground first he may still be rejected or excluded by some of the other children. They may find this to be a way to get him to leave even when he has possession of certain equipment by having arrived first.

Rules

The results of this study indicate that children are governed by rules on the playground. In a broad sense, all children must obey the rules of the school and those enforced by teachers on playground duty. In the following excerpt, it is clear that school rules can be enablers or constraints. Play on the playground equipment is enabled by school rules in the morning for children in Division 1, but constrained in the afternoon.

Interviewer:	*What are the activities that your classmates do most of the time during recess?*
Albert:	*Most of the time they're either on the swing or on the playground [equipment]... except for in the afternoon when Division 2 gets the playground [equipment].*
Interviewer:	*Division 2, is that the upper grades... 4, 5 and 6?*
Albert:	*Yes.*
Interviewer:	*So when they get the playground, what do you mean?*
Albert:	*They get the playground [equipment] in the afternoon after lunch and we [Division 1] get the playground [equipment] before lunch.*

Perhaps more urgent and meaningful to children are the rules of games and especially those set by other children. The 'unwritten code' on the playground can have a major impact on recess dynamics and the resulting behaviour of children

(Evans, 1990). As seen in the following interview excerpt, children form the rules of the playground over time. These have an impact on the inclusion of younger or less competent children in recess activities.

Interviewer:	*Are there times when the older children don't want the younger children to play, because they can't run as fast?*
David:	*No. They've learned over the years - most people have learned over the years that they have to let everybody play, or else they could get disqualified themselves.*
Interviewer:	*Oh, by who?*
David:	*Well, most of the time, the person who got the game started is the one who can disqualify people.*

Children often make up their own rules for games. Sometimes other children disapprove and respond by not wanting to play according to these new rules.

Interviewer:	*What if someone's playing that they don't like, or someone that they don't want to play with? Does that ever happen?*
Christina:	*Hm-hm. A lot.*
Interviewer:	*Yeah? A lot?*
Christina:	*Yeah because, one of the children always makes up these rules that nobody likes.*

The extent to which rules affect a child's recess play seems to be determined by the group to which that child is affiliated. Indeed, the rules of the school and teachers apply to all children, however, in smaller groups the rules of games and those set by individuals seem to be most important.

Characteristics of the Environment

The characteristics of the environment can either afford or constrain the activity choices of children. Therefore, recess experiences will be different for children in different schools (and different grades within the same school) if rules dictate where they can and cannot play. The number of choices that children have,

or feel they have, at recess can have a dramatic effect on their opportunities for play. This would be especially true if certain children are kept from the activities that most attract them.

The availability and characteristics of certain playground equipment determines participation in activities that require it. A good example of this would be the swing sets since a limited number of people can use them at any time.

Interviewer: *Why do you think some children don't do these activities [swinging or tag]?*
Brian: *Cause usually like for swings, it's already taken up. Like there's only four.*

Likewise, a playground with four different types of slides affords much more (and much more varied) slide activity than a playground with only one slide.

Even if equipment is available to use, some children choose not to use them in play due to their characteristics. Younger children have problems negotiating some of the playground apparatus. This is seen in the following interview excerpt as the interviewer reflects on some earlier responses.

Interviewer: *Would the cargo net be the thing that... the older kids are doing?*
Sonya: *Yeah.*
Interviewer: *And the jumping up and down is probably the thing that the younger children are doing?*
Sonya: *Because the cargo net has really big gaps and it's hard to get up because it swerves.*
Interviewer: *That makes it harder...*
Sonya: *And that makes it harder for the younger children to play because the younger children could slip through the holes.*

From this, there seems to be a developmental component to recess play. As children get bigger (i.e. stronger, more skilled) more options are available to them. The nature of the playground equipment seems to have an influence as well.

The characteristics of the physical playground space can also influence children's recess play. Tag is generally played in an open field but is also played on and around the playground equipment. This provides more of a challenge given the reduction in available space and difficulty of having to manoeuvre on the equipment. The following excerpt shows how the physical space and the game being played in that space can influence fun.

Interviewer:	*Why is tag fun?*
Arlene:	*Because you can run around and it's only fun if you have a big space to play it in... because you can run around more.*
Interviewer:	*So why is a big space important?*
Arlene:	*Because it's sort of easier and more fun if there's a big space.*
Interviewer:	*How is it easier?*
Arlene:	*Because you can run around anywhere.*

Weather can have an impact on the characteristics of the environment and was found to be related to both equipment and space characteristics. In winter a lot of the equipment is cold which makes it difficult for children to maintain a good grip. Mittens are slippery so children have to take them off to successfully negotiate the rings or bars. It is not long before their hands are too cold to continue. This was seen earlier when David described the costs associated with cold bars on the equipment. The amount of snow or rain also affects play since it is neat for children to slide down a slide that is freshly covered with snow yet undesirable to slide when it is wet from the rain.

Processes

The final category of themes that emerged from this study was classified as processes that include goals (goal setting), planning, and deciding. It appeared that the value components of Eccles' achievement motivation model as well as the emerging categories and themes from this study contribute to these processes. These processes go beyond the value components discussed by Eccles' et al. (1983). However, the results of this study indicated that they are very much tied to several aspects of task values and other emerging themes. In this section, goals, planning, and deciding will be discussed independently.

Goals

Investigating children's goals for recess is one of the main purposes of this study. In order to do this successfully it was necessary to investigate the influences on children's recess choices. The physical activities that they choose to do at recess time are believed to be a reflection of children's goals. From children's responses to interview questions it would have been possible to discern their goals for recess. However, a more direct approach was taken to find out how children perceived and defined their own goals for recess. When asked, children provided the following definitions of a goal.

Christina: *A goal is something you want to accomplish.*

Brian: *Like you try to be better at it or something.*

Joseph: *Oh, another goal like you're trying to reach that.*

Jennifer: *Well, just being proud of yourself by making it, like for all the time*

that you've been practicing and you finally achieve it.

Although these definitions are somewhat similar, children had varying opinions or beliefs about what is a goal and what is not a goal. In fact one of the children suggested that children do not have goals for recess but that they planned or just decided what to do. Some felt that wanting to play with friends at recess was a goal while others did not. Most children agreed that playing a certain game was not a goal, it was more of a plan or a decision. Overall support was given, however, for goals being linked to improvements in performance or skill level in games or activities.

Interviewer:	*Is getting better at an activity a goal?*
Jennifer:	*Hm-hm.*
Interviewer:	*Yeah? How is that a goal?*
Jennifer:	*Because you're practicing and practicing and then you finally get it.*
Interviewer:	*... you achieve it, like... you said before right? So why would children want to get better at activities?*
Jennifer:	*So they can do more things, like if you want to climb the tire and you want to jump off.*

These results are not surprising but they do serve to complicate an already complicated problem. Investigators were at first unsure of the best approach to take when deciding how to tap children's conceptions of their goals 'in their own words'. It was uncertain whether or not the word 'goal' would be difficult for the children to understand. In the literature on interviewing, it was suggested by Ginsburg (1997) that interviewers should ask the fundamental question. The results indicated that most children clearly understood goals and extended their thinking to situations at recess. Goals, as identified and defined by the children,

were very much in line with goals defined by Nicholls (1990) as being specific to achievement situations. Children in this study also defined goals according to broader goals as suggested by Eccles' et al. (1983). This type of goal is more general in nature in that it is not specific to individual achievement tasks. For example, a goal oriented toward a specific achievement task would be running in a race to win. A broader goal would be to play with friends at recess. In this way, the goal can be accomplished in a variety of activities. This goal is subject to change depending on the characteristics of a given task.

Planning

Planning includes making arrangements for doing an activity, and can occur before and/or during recess. Planning in both situations was reported in this study. Planning also occurs at the level of the individual (What will I do?) and the group (What can we do?).

Sonya provided details of how planning can occur alone and with regards to other children.

Interviewer: *So when children plan to do things at recess, do you think they plan them by themselves or do they plan them with other children?*

Christina: *Sometimes when you want to do stuff by yourself you plan by yourself, when you want to do stuff with other children, you plan with other children.*

Planning appears to be very much in line with goals. They were coded separately since children described them separately. The parallels that emerged from the data led to the realization that goals and planning can be very similar processes.

Deciding

When children decide on activities for recess the format is similar to planning. Some children do make decisions before recess but most do so once they emerge through the school doors. Children's reports of deciding inside seems to be closer to a definition of planning since their real and immediate recess options are not yet apparent. However, at this point we cannot speculate beyond the data. As with planning, children may decide alone or with others. Deciding alone can happen inside but it often happens on the playground as well. It was reported that deciding with groups mostly happens outside as it depends on the game that children want to play. Also, deciding or planning recess activities out loud with other children during school time is sometimes against the teacher's rules. Joseph provided the following information concerning the difference between deciding and planning.

Interviewer: *So when kids decide things... is that different from planning things?*

Joseph: *Well, I think so because deciding is like right on the spot. Planning is like planning for ahead. Like planning ahead before you decide.*

Events that occur on the playground may influence children's plans. In light of these events, children have to decide to either carry out the plan or alter their plans.

Comparison of Categories and Themes

In the previous section the results of this study were reported with quotations from children to show how these themes were coded and categorized.

The themes were often used by children in combinations of two or more. In this section, some of the more interesting relationships between these themes will be presented. In doing so, the significance of how these relationships may influence children's choices at recess time will be discussed. The precise ways in which children described their recess experiences enabled the most significant and meaningful relationships to naturally emerge as the data were examined.

Eccles' et al. (1983) model of achievement motivation is a linear model (Figure 1). Thus, Eccles and her colleagues "assumed a certain causal ordering in the directions of relations among the constructs in the model" (Wigfield, 1994, p. 71). The assumption is that children's goals and task specific beliefs influence their expectancies for success and perception of task value which then influences achievement behaviours including persistence, choice and performance (Wigfield, 1994). Despite the proposition of this particular causal sequence, Eccles and colleagues acknowledge that the sequence likely becomes quite complex (Wigfield, 1994). "Further, once into the sequence, children's beliefs will begin to influence one another in reciprocal fashion" (Wigfield, 1994, p. 71).

These considerations are crucial when the aim is to explain children's goals for recess engagement. The nature of the relationship between the stages in the model is a critical feature that should be explored. The manner in which the goals and competence perceptions of the child influence subjective task values and consequently achievement behaviours is critical to understanding choice. Also, children defined goals for recess in broader terms consistent with Eccles' et al. (1983). The results of this study have been organized into a model that represents

a combination of a specific portion of Eccles' model and the current results. The children's recess engagement model, proposed here in Figure 7, is similar to the boxes in Figure 1 that follow from children's goals to perceptions of task value to achievement behaviours. The differences between the model in Figure 7 from that of Eccles' model are based on the results of this study and on the current literature on children's motivation and goal orientation. In this way, the proposed model is a modification or extension of Eccles' model. The recess children's recess engagement model depicts an understanding of the sequential process that children likely follow when making choices at recess.

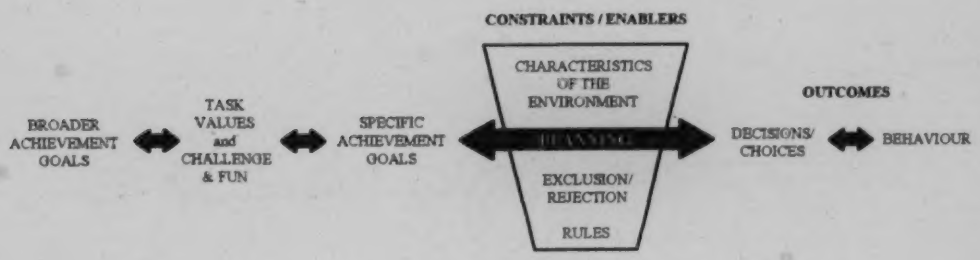

Figure 7. Children's Recess Engagement Model.

This model first recognizes the broader goals that are defined by Eccles et al. (1983). These achievement goals are the broad purposes children have for learning or doing different activities (Wigfield, 1994). As in Eccles' model, these are seen as influencing children's perceptions of task value. Along with task values, the results of this study include the emerging themes of challenge and fun in this model. Certainly, one of the complexities in Eccles' model lies in the

relationship between goals and task values. Wigfield (1994) clarifies the issue by contrasting various perspectives of achievement goals. Where Eccles' model describes broader goals associated with achievement, other researchers (Ames, 1992; Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Nicholls, 1979) have focused on more specific goals that children have, especially with regards to success in achievement situations. Nicholls (1979) described children's goals in terms of ego-involved and task-involved goals. Dweck and Elliot (1983) and Ames (1992) described children's goals in a similar manner, both describing ego-involved goals as performance goals and task-involved goals described as learning goals and mastery goals respectively. "With ego-involved goals, children try to outperform others, and are more likely to do tasks they know they can do. Task-involved children choose challenging tasks and are more concerned with their own progress than with outperforming others" (Wigfield, 1994, p. 66). Nicholls, Cobb, Wood, Yackel, and Patashnick (1990) determined that children as early as second grade were able to differentiate ego-involved and task-involved goals.

This clarifies the issue of goals since the results of this study seemed to indicate an existing relationship between goals and task values. As presented in the previous section, children in this study predominantly described their own goals for recess in line with definitions offered by Nicholls (1979); Ames (1992); and Dweck and Elliot (1983). As indicated in the children's recess engagement model in Figure 7, task values, as well as challenge and fun, are seen as being followed by achievement goals consistent with those described by Nicholls (1979); Dweck and Elliot (1983); and Ames (1992). This sequence, starting with broader

goals (as proposed by Eccles), task values and finally specific achievement goals, raises an important point of comparison between viewpoints of researchers. Dweck and Elliot (1983), as summarized by Wigfield (1994), "argue that children's values are determined by the kind of achievement situation the child is in" (p. 67). Children in evaluative achievement settings learn to value performance goals, whereas, children in mastery focused achievement settings value learning goals (Wigfield, 1994). This variation in perspective can perhaps be accounted for by the fact that Dweck and Elliot (1983) and Eccles et al. (1983) discussed different types of goals. "One way to integrate these perspectives is to suggest that the broader goals discussed by Eccles et al. are causally prior to experiences and values, with expectancies and values then determining the more specific goals in a given achievement situation" (Wigfield, 1994, p. 68). Based on this perspective and on the results of this study, the illustrated relationship between the first three aspects of the children's recess engagement model (Figure 7) was developed.

In the middle portion of the recess engagement model there are many things occurring at one time (Figure 7). Planning, as denoted by the large arrow, exists before, during, and after the existence of what are termed constraints and enablers. Constraints and enablers are comprised of the themes; exclusion/ rejection, characteristics of the environment, and rules. Children are able to plan prior to being in the recess environment since they are aware of some of the rules, contingencies, and characteristics of the environment. This stage of the process carries the assumption that children are familiar with their playground setting and

the rules, implicit and explicit, that apply to recess play. It is not until they are actually in the recess setting that they are faced with issues of availability (characteristic of the environment) or the ever-changing rules of other children. As described in the previous section, rules and characteristics of the environment can act as both enablers and constraints. If these themes afford the opportunity for a child to participate in an activity of choice, they are enablers. If, however, they do not allow a child to plan and act according to choice they are constraints. Planning occurs in conjunction with these factors whether or not the child is cognizant of them at that time. The planning arrow extends through the box containing the constraints and enablers since planning continues while these factors continually affect the child's decision making process. The box, containing constraints and enablers, can be conceptualized as a filter through which planning proceeds according to the constraining or enabling capacities of factors within. This is a dynamic process in that the child's environment and ability to choose are subject to immediate change. The final steps in the model are defined as outcomes, which consist of decisions/choices and behaviours. When children have progressed through the previous steps they are in a position to make choices regarding recess play. Children's choices may lead to general or specific achievement behaviours. In fact, children who do not make choices in achievement terms may decide to behave in a way that is entirely social.

To summarize, children's broader goals influence their task values, which then influence more specific achievement goals. The complexity of children's recess engagement lies in the relationship between goals and values. Adding to

this complexity is the integration of the themes, challenge and fun with task values. Decision making is complex based on this relationship since challenge and fun are closely related to many aspects of task value. Children's goals and values for recess guide the planning process, which is enabled or constrained by various factors. Planning happens prior to, at the same time as and/or after recess. Consideration of these factors plays an important role regarding the child's decisions and choices, which leads to the child's recess behaviours. Given that recess is so dynamic, this process is seen as being in constant circulation since many factors act to enable or constrain choices. This is a very complex process, which at this level is mere speculation. It is possible that during recess many arrows trace back from behaviour and choice to various locations on the model, depending on the nature of intervening circumstances or processes. This is illustrated in the model with the use of bi-directional arrows. This model, then, can be conceptualized in terms of recurring processes. Although the verbal responses of children in this study are unique, the nature of recurring processes is common across children.

The relationship that exists between skill, challenge and fun can be described in terms of original research on flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Csikszentmihalyi described flow as an experience which "...denotes the wholistic sensation present when we act with total involvement" (p. 43). Flow was conceptualized as the relationship between what Csikszentmihalyi termed action opportunities or challenges and action capabilities or skills (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). To be more precise, "Flow is experienced when people perceive

opportunities for action as being evenly matched by their capabilities" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 56). A balance between challenge and skill places the individual in a flow channel where they would experience a flow state. Individuals commonly describe activities as being fun when this balance or flow state exists (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). An activity where skill level is greater than the perceived challenge is often associated with boredom. In contrast, when low skill level is not balanced with a high-perceived challenge in an activity, individuals often experience anxiety. In this regard, the emerging theme of challenge is linked to fun, boredom (intrinsic value component), skill level (attainment value component), and certain aspects of performance anxiety (cost component). This reveals that children may take more than one value into account as they make decisions.

Chalip, Csikszentmihalyi, Kleiber and Larson (1984) found that children were more likely to report a balance between skill and challenge in an informal sport setting as compared to organized sport or physical education classes, where they were more likely to report an imbalance between challenge and skill. The significance of this is important regarding children's recess activities since this is the one time during their school day, which is the most informally structured. A high positive correlation between skill and challenge found by Chalip et al. (1984) in informal settings suggests that adolescents are more likely to experience flow since they can manipulate the skill/challenge balance independently. The goal, then, for many children is to find situations or activities which are optimally challenging (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Mandigo and Thompson (1998) describe

how a sense of choice and control must exist to experience flow. This includes making decisions on how to change aspects of one's environment so that a balance between skill and challenge can be attained. The following excerpt demonstrates how, in a hypothetical situation, a child, to achieve this balance between skill and challenge, can modify the environment.

Interviewer:	*So let's just say that a kid can't catch a ball very well and he wants to be included. He wants to play soccer-baseball. Do the other children let him play?*
Arlene:	*Yeah.*
Interviewer:	*Yeah? Even though he's not very good?*
Arlene:	*Hm-hm.*
Interviewer:	*Okay. How would he play in that game? Where would they play?*
Arlene:	*Well, maybe he would only kick the ball. Or maybe he'd be - maybe he'd just pick the ball up instead of catching it.*
Interviewer:	*Instead of trying to catch it, okay. So why would they only kick the ball... is that because they can't catch it?*
Arlene:	*Yeah.*

The decision to participate in the activity is gauged according to skill level. Since skill level cannot be changed immediately or automatically, this child's environment or his or her role in the game is changed to achieve this balance. The child is afforded an opportunity to participate. Creating this balance does not ensure achieving a flow experience since there are other criteria, but it does work to modify the child's behaviour from potential avoidance to participation.

There is also an important relationship between skill level and being with friends. Children's goals to be with their friends are often considered along with their skill level in the task in which their friends are engaged. A child in this situation weighs the goal of friendship with their skill level to determine whether the goal of being with friends is worth exposing or demonstrating a low level of

proficiency in the task. Children were asked whether it mattered to children's friends if they were not good at an activity:

Interviewer:	*Do you think it matters to kids that other kids aren't as good as them.*
Christina:	*To some kids sometimes.*

Interviewer:	*Why do you think she would do those activities if she isn't very good at them?*
Jennifer:	*Well, she wants to get better at them so she would play and maybe just play with her friends.*
Interviewer:	*Do you think it matters to her friends that she's not good at it?*
Jennifer:	*No.*

Depending on the situation then, the skill level of the individual may be an important factor in relation to the original goal of being with friends. The goal of being with friends is the controlling factor in the case where the desire to be with friends exceeds negative influences associated with low skill level. The individual controls this situation if in fact his or her friends do not reject him or her based on low skill level. If a child is rejected, friends' perception of the individual's skill level is the deciding factor in whether or not approval to participate in that activity with them is granted. This demonstrates a clear relationship between goals and values whereby, the goal to be with friends is overridden by the influence of others' decisions based on a deficient skill level.

Exclusion or rejection then, is also related to skill level. As seen above, skill level does play a significant role in determining children's activity choices. It can act to afford or constrain activity choices depending on the specific context or current environment which the child inhabits. During the previous discussion of

exclusion/rejection it was mentioned that children's freedom to exclude other children is governed by the rules of teachers and the school. Children are also excluded from activities for social reasons. There are legitimate criteria for exclusion (e.g. only four swings) as well as many other criteria that have to do with informal rules (e.g. even numbers on teams) or traditions (e.g. areas of the playground are 'territories' for different groups). Gender is a guideline that many children, both boys and girls, use when deciding who participates in particular recess activities. Social relationships largely determine membership within certain groups of children. Results of this study confirm findings by Eccles et al. (1983) and Sarkin et al. (1997). "Gender-based peer expectations and norms may influence a child's choice of physical activity, and this is more likely to be apparent during unstructured situations such as recess" (Sarkin et al., 1997, p. 103). For the children interviewed in this study, playing with children from other cohorts, especially older children, is generally avoided since this is associated with many of the negative costs of engaging in recess activities.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION, FUTURE DIRECTIONS, AND PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Conclusion

Recess time is a very dynamic part of a child's school day. The complexity of children's goals for recess time stems from each child's individuality and as a result of an ever-changing environment. Children's choices for recess activities are affected by other children, the weather, characteristics of the playground,

rules, the playground equipment, and, perhaps most significantly, by their goals. Children in this study described their choices for recess in achievement terms, social relationships and a multitude of other variables. It is clear that many children described some of their choices in achievement terms, thereby supporting the argument that recess is an achievement setting. However, the same children also described other decisions about, or goals for, recess in non-achievement terms that are better defined in terms of social relationships. This helps to explain why some children participate in activities even if they are not very good at them. Participation in this instance carries with it a risk of performing poorly in the presence of others. These factors are overridden by the goal of simply wanting to play with other children or with a friend. The competition between these goals seems to be a very important factor in children's recess choices. Although Eccles' theory did apply in describing many children's recess choices, results of this study suggest that it did not provide an all encompassing explanation. However, results of this study did show that the task value components of Eccles' model did account for the majority of reasons provided by children regarding their goals and choices for recess. Other themes that emerged from this study, such as fun and challenge, also contributed to an understanding of children's recess participation and illustrate how children weigh their own goals and values in making recess decisions. The processes of making plans, deciding and setting goals provided interesting insights. Planning and deciding were seen as being very much related to goal setting. It appeared that children plan according to their goals and then make decisions based on factors which act to constrain or enable participation in

activities at recess.

Children's goals, other than achievement goals, are perhaps best explained by the taxonomy of human goals described by Ford and Nichols (1987). Their taxonomy of human goals outlines two broad categories; desired within-person consequences and desired person-environment consequences. These pertain to goals in various situations and are not limited to achievement goals as described in Eccles' achievement motivation model. Being with friends, for example, is a goal that can be explained by both broad, task-specific goals (Eccles et al., 1983) and by more general, person-environment goals (Ford & Nichols, 1987). Soccer-baseball is an activity that requires many children to play. If a child wants to play this game because his or her friends are playing it, he or she is guided by task-specific goals (Eccles et al., 1983). On the other hand, wanting to be with friends regardless of the activity they are playing is more associated with general goals defined by Ford and Nichols (1987). Human behaviour is explainable in a far broader context than in achievement terms as described in within-person and environment-person goals (Ford & Nichols, 1987). To summarize, results indicate that recess is not an achievement setting all of the time to all children. Children sometimes make decisions that are not based on achievement terms. The significance of this is that although Eccles' model of achievement motivation described the majority of children's choices and goals, it cannot fully describe children's goals for recess engagement.

The use of qualitative methodology in this study allowed for in-depth investigation of children's choices and goals for recess. It is interesting to note

that, when children were being questioned about another child, many responded based on their own experiences. This point lends support for this approach, that is using an indirect interview method to ask about the possible goals of another child while gaining insight into the actual goals of the child being interviewed. The advantage of the approach used in this study is that such information could not be gathered by other means. As seen in this study, theory testing through qualitative interviews enabled investigators to probe beyond data collected by self-report measures to explore underlying reasons for real individuals' recess behaviours. In a related study by Watkinson and Causgrove Dunn (1997), children were asked, after recess, to report the activities in which they just participated. This type of data collection, while producing valuable data, does not provide the depth that is possible with interviews. This observation led the investigator to the approach used in this study whereby children's recess engagement patterns were studied more closely. Investigators have been working with the assumption that recess is an achievement setting, especially in relation to the play behaviours of boys. The design of this study is one way in which to test this assumption and the extent to which Eccles' task value components account for engagement patterns that children exhibit in an informal recess setting.

Future Directions

A recommendation for future research would be to conduct a series of brief interviews prior to recess to ask children about their goals for the upcoming recess period. Observations can then be conducted to see the extent to which

children carry out their goals. Variations in their goals can then be explored after recess to discover what factors influenced their desired goals or if their goals in fact changed once they got out on the playground (Dr. Ken Fox, personal communication, March 1999).

The findings of this study may ultimately be used to develop a set of questions that teachers can use in concert with the self-report card already under development (Watkinson & Causgrove Dunn, 1997). These questions could be used to investigate underlying reasons for difficulties that children may have at recess. Using this information, it is hoped that teachers will be able to help children with the problems that they encounter at recess, to improve their recess experiences, as well as foster the positive consequences that accompany successful recess participation.

Teachers concerned with the wholistic child might be interested in playground behaviours. It is likely that the behaviours of children on the playground are not isolated. There was evidence in this study that children plan recess activities during class time. Following recess, it is unlikely that children can completely switch modes and immediately settle themselves for academic activities. An interesting account of this is provided in an article by Evans (1990). Teachers can have a dramatic influence on planning and engagement in recess activity by the rules they establish. Knowledge of what children do at recess and why, might be important regarding the development of recess policies. An awareness of this influence can be used to assist in ensuring that children's recess experiences are positive ones.

Personal Reflections

The experience of interviewing children in this study was very special. It was an amazing opportunity and a privilege to share a short time in the children's lives. Talking about their experiences at recess enabled me to gain some insight into what it is like to be a grade three child during recess at this school. If I had interviewed children at a different school, the experience would likely have been different. Most children in this study seemed to enjoy recess, but there were certainly many aspects that they did not like. Their insights into the less positive aspects of recess were very interesting. It was also very interesting to see how they reacted to me and to take note of how I reacted to them. For the verbal child, I was able to get excited and deeply involved in our conversation. There was one girl in particular who simply fascinated me. The way in which she described occurrences on the playground was amazing, she was very much aware of the recess environment. The way she spoke was almost as if she would hover above the playground and take account of the activities and relationships between other children.

In contrast, for the child who was apprehensive, I tried to put myself in their shoes and attempted to answer the questions that might be running through their minds such as "When will this be over?" or "What a stupid question". The children in the two interviews that I ended early, were very withdrawn and reluctant to speak. I learned first hand the skills involved to make a child feel comfortable and decrease anxiety. Unfortunately, I was not able to achieve this with these children.

While walking in the hallway of the school one day I was greeted by one of the children that I was yet to interview. He was so energetic and was asking when I was going to talk with him. When it was his turn to be interviewed, I was anticipating a good interview with lots of energy and conversation. I was wrong. He was in a totally different mood and at first it was difficult to get more than one word responses. Fortunately, things did change for the better by about mid way through.

I learned through pilot interviews that it was necessary to spend 7 to 8 minutes to clearly communicate expectations and build rapport prior to asking questions. In an interview with one of the boys, I was overtaken from the beginning. He was extremely verbal and was at times difficult to keep on task. From this, I learned that an overly verbal child, as with a non-verbal child, produce about the same amount of relevant information. At first, I thought I had hit the jackpot, but quickly learned that it would be one of my most difficult interviews to conduct.

The interview experience with each child was unique. I gained insights into the goals that each child in this group holds when venturing onto the playground and attempting to sustain guidance by their own free will to choose activities that they want to do for the next fifteen minutes.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Part I: Indirect Questioning

- Here are two sheets that I received from a student. His name is James. As you can see there aren't any activities using a ball circled on either of the sheets.
- Why do you think that is?
- Is there a time at recess when you think James might do activities with balls?
- How might it be different if James is by himself than if he were with other children?

- Sometimes children play by themselves during recess. Can you think of reasons why a child would play by themselves during recess?

- At recess one day, I saw Kim sitting by the school. For the whole recess period she sat in the same spot and didn't play with other children.
- Why do you think Kim might not get involved with the other students?
- Why do you think Kim might not do something else on her own?

- Chantal reported that she is very good at running. On the playground, however, she almost never plays chase or tag.
- Why do you think that is?

- Can you think of the most common activities that your classmates do during recess?
- Why do you think children do those common activities?
- Why do you think a child might not do those common activities?

Drawings of actual common activities of classmates (boys & girls).

- Why might a child do this activity?
- Why might a child not do this activity?

Part II: Theory Testing (Direct Questioning)

- I want to ask you some questions and give examples of situations that happen to some children at recess. I want to know what you think of each situation.

- Lisa will not play on playground equipment because she said she is not good at climbing. She told me "It is important for me to be good at the activities that I choose to do".
- I asked Lisa if her classmates climbed on the playground equipment, she said "yes". She said that she would rather play alone than play with her classmates on the playground equipment. She also said she is embarrassed that she cannot climb very well.
- Aaron told me that he climbs on the equipment since it is interesting to him and that he enjoys it.
- Claire plays on the equipment because she wants to get better like some of her classmates. She wants to be able to climb an every part of the equipment.

There seems to be lots of reasons why children do and do not do activities at recess. Do you think that the children in the following situations will do these activities at recess? Why or Why not?

- Emily says being good at climbing on playground equipment is important to her.
- Jonathan says he enjoys soccer, he says it is interesting to him.
- Karen wishes she were better at swinging because her classmates are good at swinging.
- Jimmy says that his classmates often ask him to play.
- It is not important to Helen that she does well at catching a ball.
- George does not enjoy playing in the sand and does not find it interesting.
- Most of Carrie's classmates skip (jump rope), but she says she does not want to get better at skipping.
- Bill says that he gets really tired when he runs around a lot in games like tag and soccer.

- Todd gave me this report after recess one day. He plays all the activities that his friends play even though he says he isn't very good at those activities and doesn't enjoy doing those activities.
- Why do you think Todd would do these activities if he isn't very good at them?
- Why do you think Todd would do these activities if he doesn't enjoy doing them?

- Melissa often watches her classmates play tag. She says tag is interesting, but she does not play.
- Why do you think she might not play even though she finds it interesting?

Part III: Personal Questioning

- We have talked a lot about other children all through the interview. I would like to know more about what you do at recess?"

- You mentioned at the beginning that _____ is one of your favourite activities. You also mentioned _____.
- Why is _____ one of your favourite activities?
- Is it important that you are good at _____?
- Why is it important that you are good at _____?
- Can you think of an activity that it is not important to you that you are good at?
- Why isn't it important that you are good at _____?
- When you are doing an activity with your classmates, is it important that you are good at the activity?
- If your classmates are watching you play is it important that you are good at the activity?
- What are some of your least favourite activities at recess time?
- Why is _____ one of your least favourite activities?
- Do you do them sometimes anyway? Why?
- Do any of your classmates do these activities?
- How good are you at those activities/skills in comparison to other children?

- Are you registered in sports or programs outside of school (e.g. hockey, swimming, soccer, dance)?
- If yes, do you practice for that sport at recess?
- Why do you?
- Do you ever practice other activities at recess?
- Why do you practice?

- Can you tell me some activities that require a lot of effort (take a lot of work) to perform.
- Do you do any of these activities?
- Why do you do them even though they require a lot of effort?
- How do these activities make you feel?
- Why do you think you feel that way?

Appendix B

Interview Checklist

Interview Checklist

Check (✓) the box for each of the following criteria if fulfilled in the interview.

Categories: (1) Expectations (2) Rapport (3) Questioning (4) Attention (5) Anxiety (6) Communication

(1) Expectations

- ❒ Explain why interviewer is video recording and note taking during the interview.
- ❒ Assure respondents of absolute confidentiality before beginning the interview.
- ❒ Explain the purpose of the interview.
- ❒ Was the description of the interview free from evaluative content?
- ❒ Provide children with proper expectations of their role.
- ❒ Explain the role of the interviewer at the outset of the interview.
- ❒ Identify the activities in which the interviewer will engage during the interview session
- ❒ Explain to child that they were not singled (e.g. poor academic performance) but that all (or most) children in the class are being interviewed.
- ❒ Explain the potential benefits of the study to the respondents.

(2) Rapport

- ❒ Establish good rapport with the child.
- ❒ Build rapport by engaging in small talk before beginning the interview, using everyday conversational style.
- ❒ Begin with an easy task.
- ❒ Put the child in the role of the expert.
- ❒ Child seemed comfortable with the interviewer.
- ❒ Display warmth and support.

(3) Questioning

- ❒ Encourage effort.
- ❒ Encourage verbalization.
- ❒ Pose questions that are clear and meaningful to the respondent.
- ❒ Ask questions that contain only a single idea.
- ❒ Rephrase the question.
- ❒ In phrasing questions, specify the frame of reference you want the respondent to use in answering the question.
- ❒ Repeat and review tasks.
- ❒ Probe unclear responses.
- ❒ Help the child to introspect.
- ❒ Ask the fundamental question.

- ❒ Avoid leading questions.
- ❒ Avoid unnecessary corrections and teaching.
- ❒ Explore interesting leads.
- ❒ Encourage the child's way of solving problems.
- ❒ Do not hint - either by specific comment, tone of voice, or non-verbal cues such as shaking the head, at preferred or expected responses to a particular question.
- ❒ Avoid talking too much.
- ❒ Remain silent when necessary.
- ❒ Do not ask many closed form questions in succession.
- ❒ Do not change interview topics too often.
- ❒ Avoid contradicting or appearing to cross-examine the respondent.
- ❒ Save complex or controversial questions for the latter part of the interview after rapport has been established.

(4) Attention

- ❒ Prepare specific tasks in which the child can engage.
- ❒ Use theoretically meaningful tasks.
- ❒ Vary the task when necessary.
- ❒ Did the interviewer attract and maintain the interest and attention of young children using, for example, cartoon drawings?
- ❒ Children engaged in other tasks besides the interview, such as play, can provide inaccurate information since their attention to the question is reduced, which affects the reliability of the interview.
- ❒ Adapt to child's developmental characteristics.
  - ❒ limited attention span.
  - ❒ language skills.

(5) Anxiety

- ❒ Monitor affect.
- ❒ Observe key aspects of the child's behaviour.
- ❒ Show "clinical sensitivity" to the individual.
- ❒ Did interviewer make steps to avoid periods of silence? For example, "That's kind of a hard question to think about right now." or "Maybe we can talk more about that later, because right now I'd like to talk about..."
- ❒ If a respondent seems threatened by a specific topic, move on to another one. Try returning to the topic later, with different phrasing.
- ❒ When posing threatening or sensitive questions, ask the respondent about the behaviour of friends as well as about the respondent's own behaviour.

(6) Communication

Communication skills are helpful in building rapport and eliciting co-operation from the child. Which of the following were used by the interviewer.

	Skill	Definition	Example
❒	Acknowledgement	A verbal or non-verbal behaviour that has little or no manifest content.	"Mm-hmm" Head nod. Smile. "I see."
❒	Descriptive statement	A non-evaluative comment that describes the present situation.	"That little girl doll is playing by herself." "You look like you're thinking hard about that question."
❒	Reflective statement	A statement that repeats what the child has said.	"You sound pretty happy that she kept her promise."
❒	Praise statement	A statement that expresses explicit positive evaluation.	"You're doing a nice job of explaining this to me." "It sounds like you really thought about that and handled it the best way you could have."
❒	Question	An expression of inquiry made to elicit information. Open-ended. Closed-ended.	"What chores do your parents want you to do?" "When does daddy come to visit you?"
❒	Command	An instruction in declarative form.	"Tell me more about that."
❒	Summary statement	A condensed reiteration of preceding content.	"We've talked about everyone who lives at your house."
❒	Critical statement (to be avoided)	A statement that expresses disapproval.	"That isn't very nice." "You aren't describing that very clearly."

(Boggs & Eyberg, 1990, p.88)

Comments/Necessary Improvements:

Appendix C

Interview Grid

Interview Grid Name:

	Child Generated (indirect)	Child Reaction (direct)
Most Common Activities		
Kids play by themselves / others	+ / –	
James (does not play with balls)	+ / –	
Chantel (does not run at recess)	+ / –	
Kim (sits by school all recess)	+ / –	
Running	+ / –	
Bounce Ball	+ / –	
Catch Ball	+ / –	
Playground Equipment	+ / –	